

The Emperor Manuel Comnenus (1143-1180) His Patronage and Image Building in the Latin States in Outremer, and the Mystery of the Friuli Bible

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*'Emmanuelque, dator largus, pius imperitator (sic)'
inscription in the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem¹*

Patronage was an essential part of the life and function of a Byzantine emperor. The Byzantine court ceremonial, as we find it in the ninth-century redaction ordered by Constantine Porphyrogenitus (913/945-959) and which goes under his name as *De ceremoniis aulae byzantinae*, does not explicitly mention this role in an emperor's life². It was clearly taken for granted that an emperor was a patron of the arts, which, in Byzantium, were dominated by religious themes although the secular arts had a place in Byzantine life. An emperor was expected to patronage churches and monasteries by founding and restoring them, and by furnishing them with *liturgica* such as icons, reliquaries, liturgical books etc.

Image building was part of patronage, directly and indirectly, in various ways according to the circumstances. In the literal sense of the word image building, i.e. the commissioning of portraits and their production, enabled the emperor and his immediate surroundings to become more visible. It was also a means, successful or not, to survive in the eyes and minds of people. Not every Byzantine emperor was in a position to play an important role as patron of religious institutions, of works of public utility, such as the construction and repair of roads, bridges, cisterns etc., and as a patron of individuals, like court poets, court orators etc. Patronage took time and money, especially where greater projects were concerned.

The Emperor Justinian (527-565) was one of the emperors who built up a reputation as a great patron of the Church, of public works and of the arts in general. He built roads, aqueducts, bridges, and military works (fortifications etc.), and stimulated the reparation and maintenance of roads etc. The Great Church, St Sophia, is still there to remind us of his role in church building. The statue of the emperor on horseback in the Augusteion, next to St Sophia, survived long centuries of history,

and was even used as a literary image in French *romans courtois* before it was eventually taken down³. Many more examples of Justinian's activities and of those of his predecessors and successors could easily be brought forward. There was a long tradition among Byzantine rulers to patronize the arts in all its aspects.

Patronage and image building by a Byzantine emperor were meant to enhance his prestige not only as the ruler of the Byzantine world, but also to accentuate his being God's representative on earth, as the thirteenth apostle. This was the reason why he was called the 'Holy Emperor' and was represented with a nimbus. Western contemporary historians expressed their dislike of this title and the shock of their compatriots who were confronted with, in their eyes, such an extraordinary qualification for rulers who did not always live up to sainthood⁴.

Political ambitions played a role in patronage and image building. These were shown in an open or in a disguised way, depending on the emperor's goals and depending on the political and religious circumstances.

From old times onwards the holy and Christian emperors of Byzantium had showed a great interest in Jerusalem, the centre of the Christian world. The

¹ De Jerphanion 1935, 245-246, argues that the Latin inscription in Bethlehem was made by a Latin who was 'uncontrolled' by the Greek authorities; Cutler 1986-1987, 179 (Greek text only); Hunt 1991b, 73, n. 28; Folda 1995, 347, 350. I am very grateful to Dr Carlo Venuti and the staff of the Biblioteca Guarneriana, San Daniele, for kindly showing me the Bible in all tranquillity, and for providing me with a photograph of fol. 156v.

² Reiske 1829-1830 (Vogt 1935-1940). See also Maguire 1997, and esp. Jolivet-Lévy, 1997.

³ Janin 1964, 74-75. For Justinian, see Dewing 1940.

⁴ Wattenbach 1861, 510, 'Dominus vester sanctum se appellat'.

Arab conquests of the seventh century had forced the Greeks to find a *modus vivendi* with the new rulers of Jerusalem, siege of one of the five patriarchates of the Greek Orthodox Church. The Byzantine emperors became the protectors of the Greek Orthodox community living in Jerusalem and the rest of Palestine⁵.

With the coming of the crusaders to Syria and Palestine the situation was to change considerably. Conquests and reconquests by the Greeks, the Armenians, the Arabs and the Turks had resulted in continually stretching and shrinking borders. Regions and cities changed hands more than once. This did not change when the Latins settled in the area. In 1096 the Latin leaders stopped in Constantinople and pledged a feudal oath, an oath of allegiance, to the Byzantine Emperor Alexius I Comnenus (1081-1118), promising to give back to him those territories they were to conquer and which had formerly belonged to the Byzantine emperor. In return the Greeks were to help them in various ways, militarily and logistically, with food, guides, interpreters etc. This was in fact in accordance with the feudal oath. As their feudal lord, Alexius Comnenus had his obligations and responsibilities. In 1108 Bohemond of Taranto, the Latin ruler of Antioch, was forced to renew his feudal oath to the emperor in the treaty known as the Treaty of Devol. The Greek patriarchate of Antioch would be restored, no longer would there be a Latin patriarch nominated by Bohemond I or his successors. Jerusalem did not play a role in the Treaty of Devol. Jerusalem had become the centre of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem whereas Antioch had become a separate principality, nearer to the Byzantine border⁶.

Such was the situation when Manuel Comnenus succeeded to his father John Comnenus (1118-1143). In the early 1140s the emperor and his son were campaigning in Cilicia. They were planning to go to Antioch, the former eastern capital of the

empire, which had a great reputation for its monuments, and of which John Comnenus was the overlord. Antioch was a commercial, administrative and ecclesiastical centre, one of the five patriarchates of the Greek Orthodox Church. The feudal bond between the Greeks and Bohemond I, the Norman ruler of the city, had more than once been violated. The Normans of southern Italy and Sicily were one of Byzantium's worst enemies. Gradually the Norman element in the princely family of Antioch was to change by the arrival of French nobles who married into the princely family.

So far no Byzantine emperor or patriarch or other ecclesiastical leader had been able to make an official visit to the city. In the early 1140s it was Raymond of Poitiers (1136-1149), uncle of Eleonore of Aquitaine, Queen of France, and with him the ruling Latin elite of Antioch who was unwilling to let their suzerain enter the city. John Comnenus claimed the city as his, including its fortifications and munitions. Nevertheless the Latins opposed his plan. It was late 1142 and the Latins were convinced that the indolent Greeks would soon lose the city again to the enemy as had happened before, if they were to hand over the city to the Greeks⁷. John Comnenus decided to winter in Cilicia and try his chance again in the spring of 1143. During a hunting party, however, the emperor was seriously wounded which caused his death. His son Manuel immediately returned to Constantinople where he was to succeed his father although he was a younger son. The refusal of the Latins to hand over the city to his father and the denial and the impossibility to see for themselves the so famous city and its shrines, sanctuaries and monuments, must have haunted him.

Like his father, Manuel Comnenus was active in the eastern provinces of the empire, diplomatically and militarily. The claim on Antioch was not forgotten. Eventually Manuel was able to impose his will on the Latin leader of Antioch, although in a limited way as we shall see. In 1159 Manuel was able to impose himself as the overlord of Antioch by submitting publicly, and in a rather humiliating way, Reynald of Châtillon (1153-1160), second husband of the Princess Constance, widow of Raymond of Poitiers. Reynald was summoned to come to Mamistra (modern Misis, Turkey) to submit publicly to Manuel who was campaigning in Cilicia. Friends and enemies were attending the ceremony. The emperor announced his visit to Antioch

⁵ Runciman 1948, *passim*.

⁶ After new hostilities between Byzantium and the Normans, the feudal contract was reconfirmed in 1107-1108, Anna Comnena, *Alexiad* XIII, xii, Leib 1937-1945, III, 125-139 (Sewter 1969, 424-434); see also la Monte 1932. For the oath during the first crusade, see Buisson 1985.

⁷ William of Tyre, *Chronicon*, XV, 19-21 (Huygens 1986, II, 700-703). Guillaume de Nangis is the only source who says that John Comnenus visited Antioch, see Bouquet 1840, 732.

and ordered the necessary preparations to be made for the occasion. The Byzantine protocol for a solemn, not to say triumphant, entry was to be in vigour. Several sources, Armenian, Greek and Latin, have described the events taking place during the imperial visit. They tell how the Latin clergy waited with Bibles in their hands at the cathedral. They mention the traditional distribution of gifts to the population in the form of coins, which usually carried the portrait of the emperor. Greek soldiers were posted along the streets, on the fortifications and on the citadel⁸. The streets were decorated with flowers and green branches, and with banners, which must also have carried the portrait of the emperor⁹. All sorts of festivities and pleasant activities took place. Manuel was now no longer *de iure* but also *de facto* the ruler of Antioch, at least it seemed to be so. The official entry into Antioch by a Byzantine emperor was, politically and ecclesiastically, an event of the greatest importance.

For various reasons Manuel was actively engaged in the politics of the Latin States in Outremer, in Syria and in Palestine, at least he tried to do so as far as he could. Political, ecclesiastical and even matrimonial alliances existed between Constantinople and Outremer. Matrimonial alliances between members of the Comnenian dynasty and the kings of Jerusalem, and with the princely family in Antioch, had to cement good relations during his reign. In September 1158, Baldwin III, King of Jerusalem (1143-1163), had married Theodora who was a niece of Manuel Comnenus. His brother Amalric, who succeeded him as King of Jerusalem (1163-1174), married Maria Comnena in 1167. Two successive kings of Jerusalem had thus married into the ruling family of the Byzantine Empire. Manuel himself, by then a widower, married Maria of Antioch on Christmas Day 1161. She was the daughter of the Princess Constance and Raymond of Poitiers, and sister of Bohemond III who was to rule the Principality of Antioch from 1163 to 1201. They were cousins of Eleonore of Aquitaine who, in 1152, had married Henry II Plantagenet, King of England. They belonged to the royal network of western Europe where cultural activities were in full swing¹⁰.

The crown on Manuel's political activities in Antioch was to be the reinstallment of a Greek Orthodox patriarch. Athanasius III had been elected as Patriarch of Antioch in 1157 but had not been allowed by the Latins to take on his function in

Antioch. The promise made by Reynald in 1159 to restore the Greek Orthodox patriarchate, however, remained void and Athanasius was to remain in Constantinople.

In Byzantine politics secular ambitions and ecclesiastical ambitions were intertwined. Manuel's entry into Antioch was eventful, politically and ecclesiastically, because the King of Jerusalem had been present in Mamistra and in Antioch¹¹. The promise to restore the Greek patriarchate must have filled the emperor's mind with satisfaction the more so since he had the ambition to become the ecclesiastical leader of East and West, including the Crusader States.

In 1164 Nureddin made Bohemond III and a number of Latin leaders his prisoners. The Latin Patriarch Aimery of Limoges (ca 1143 - ca 1192) ruled Antioch until Manuel Comnenus helped to ransom his brother-in-law. When Bohemond went to Constantinople to express his gratitude, he was confronted with the condition to reinstall a Greek Orthodox patriarch. This time it was more difficult for the ruler of Antioch to ignore or sabotage the emperor's wishes. Aimery of Limoges retired to his summer residence in Al-Qusayr (Koz Kalesi) some 15 km south of Antioch in the mountains¹². He had to make way for Athanasius who had been one of the celebrants at the marriage ceremony of Manuel Comnenus and Maria of Antioch in Constantinople.

⁸ For John Cinnamus, see Meineke 1836, 186-188 (transl.: Brand, 141-143; Rosenblum, 125-126); William of Tyre, *Chronicon*, XVIII, 23, 25 (Huygens 1986, II, 844-845, 847-849); Dédéyan 1980, 45-46; for Matthew of Edessa, see Dostourian 1993, 273-274. See also Magdalino 1993, 67-69, and 495-496, for official speeches about this triumphal entry.

⁹ For the use of banners with imperial portraits, see, e.g., Niketas Choniates, van Dielen 1975, 237 (ed. Bekker 1835, 308; Grabler 1958, *Abenteurer auf dem Kaiserthron*, 26); for the Latin patriarch and his clergy, see William of Tyre, *Chronicon*, XVIII, 25 (Huygens 1986, II, 848, 'cum textibus evangeliorum'); see also Magdalino/Nelson 1982, 151.

¹⁰ Brand 1968, 8, 14. For Manuel's relations with the Latin East, see Magdalino 1993, 66-76, esp. 72. Between 1175 and 1178, Bohemond III, widower of Orgueilleuse de Harenc, married Theodora who was a cousin of Manuel, see Brand 1968, 22; Magdalino 1993, 98, 215.

¹¹ According to the Armenian historian Smbat, Baldwin III received very rich gifts from the emperor at that occasion, see Dédéyan 1980, 45-46.

¹² William of Tyre, *Chronicon*, XIX, 9, 11 (Huygens 1986, II, 874, 878); Magdalino 1993, 67-68.

In that same period, in the late 1160s, Manuel started to play a role in the restoration of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, in use as the Latin cathedral. The restoration was a co-patronage with King Amalric of Jerusalem. This joint patronage and the presence of a multi-ethnic team of artists (Latin, Greek and Syrian) may be seen as proof of Manuel's ecumenical ambitions while he was already engaged in talks with the pope in the hope to reunite the churches¹³. It was certainly an attempt to realize his own image building, i.e. 'to be in places', of an emperor whose portrait could be seen in various places in the church of Bethlehem and even in the sanctuary above the Holy Cave. According to the Greek monk John Phokas, who made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1185, these portraits were placed in the church at the initiative of the Latin bishop, which seems rather doubtful, taking into consideration the dominant role of the Byzantine emperor. The joint patronage with King Amalric of Jerusalem was commemorated by an inscription in Greek and in Latin in which the Greek emperor is described as a generous donor and a pious emperor, 'Emmanuelque, dator largus, pius imperitator (sic)'¹⁴.

¹³ For the much discussed restoration of the Church of the Nativity, see e.g. Jotischky 1994; Kühnel 1994, 54-59; Pringle 1993, 137-156. Hamilton 1980, 164, draws attention to the inscription of the mosaic representing the council of Constantinople of 381, where the *filioque* for the procession of the Holy Spirit was left out, thus following the Orthodox tradition. Folda 1995, 347-378, has a long section on the Church of the Nativity.

¹⁴ Magdalino stressed the image building by Manuel Comnenus; see Magdalino 1981, 63; *idem* 1993, 413. For the portrait in Bethlehem, see John Phokas, *PG* 133, 957 (Wilkinson/Hill/Ryan 1988, 333; Külzer 1994, 302); for the inscription in the church see n. 1 *supra*.

¹⁵ William of Tyre, *Chronicon*, XX, 18 (Huygens 1986, II, 934-936); Cahen 1940, 507; Mayer 1989.

¹⁶ For the monastery church of the Prophet Elijah, see John Phokas (see bibliography s.v. Ioannes Phokas), *PG* 133, 955-956 (Wilkinson/Hill/Ryan 1988, 332; Külzer 1994, 302); Pringle 1998, 224. For the monastery church of the Prodromos, near the Jordan River, see John Phokas, *PG* 133, 951-952 (Wilkinson/Hill/Ryan 1988, 329; Külzer 1994, 299-300); Pringle 1998, 240-241.

¹⁷ Kühnel 1994, 26, n. 35, who refers to Boase 1977, 106; William of Tyre, *Chronicon*, XVIII, 25 (Huygens 1986, II, 848, for Manuel's visit to Antioch in 1159), and XXII, 5 (Huygens 1986, II, 1012 for the obituary at the king's death in 1180), 'cuius memoria in benedictione, cuius elemosinas et largissima beneficia enarrabit omnis ecclesia sanctorum'; cf. Magdalino 1993, 3.

Manuel's patronage and image building seem to have been intensified by natural disasters like earthquakes and warfare. The violent earthquake on June 29, 1170, by which many people were killed and fortifications, houses and churches were badly damaged, especially in northern Syria, stimulated Manuel to be involved in the restoration of sanctuaries of the various denominations.

At the moment of the earthquake of 1170, on the feast day of St Peter and St Paul, the Greek Patriarch of Antioch was celebrating the Liturgy. He was seriously wounded when the cathedral of St Peter was damaged by falling debris. At the request of Bohemond III the Latin Patriarch Aimery of Limoges returned to Antioch to resume his former function while Athanasius was dying. For inexplicable reasons Aimery of Limoges stayed in function, with or without the permission or consent of Manuel¹⁵.

Manuel patronized indiscriminately sanctuaries of the various Christian communities that had suffered damage. John Phokas mentions him as the rebuilder of the Orthodox monastery of the Prophet Elijah in Judaea, between Jerusalem and Bethlehem, after an earthquake, possibly the earthquake of 1170. The same goes for the Orthodox monastery of the Prodromos, i.e. St John the Baptist, in the Judaeian desert near the Jordan River, which was completely rebuilt after an earthquake¹⁶.

The Latin cathedral of Tyre was restored after the earthquake of 1170, possibly with financial aid from Manuel. William of Tyre, archbishop of Tyre, twice visited Constantinople, in 1168 and in the winter of 1179/1180. In his *Chronicon* he praised Manuel's generosity, during his entry into Antioch, but also when he mentions the death of the emperor who had been so generous to Christian churches¹⁷.

More complicated is Manuel's involvement with the monastery of St George of Gibelin (Bethgibelin, Beersheba). In a diploma issued in 1173 by the Grand Master of the Hospital, the monastery is ceded for lifetime to Meletios the Syrian, archbishop of Gaza and Eleutheropolis, but remained affiliated to the Order of St John of Jerusalem. Among the witnesses of the diploma are Greek ecclesiastics of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The diploma stipulates that prayers should be said for the salvation of the very Holy Emperor Manuel of Constantinople ('et sit elemosina pro Domino Manuele, sanctissimo Constantinopolitano, imperatore Romanorum

semper augusto, ut Deus eum sic in presenti regere et dirigere dignetur ad ecclesie bonum, quatinus in futuro regnum percipiat eternum'). The situation about the monastery is not quite clear. It seems to have been a Byzantine Orthodox monastery, which, for unknown reasons, had come into Hospitallers' hands. The prayers for Manuel Comnenus, qualified here as the 'very holy emperor', suggest that there was a special bond with the Byzantine emperor. May be a special favour by the emperor prompted this gratitude of the Hospital making the Grand Master use this qualification, so exceptional in western sources and especially in its superlative form. Patronage by the emperor for the restoration of the castle and the fortifications of Bethgibelin, and/or gratitude for help with repair works or a fundamental restoration of the monastery may have been the reason for this qualification. The date of the diploma suggests recent help, possibly after the earthquake of 1170¹⁸.

Manuel's patronage of the mural paintings in the Church of the Prophet Jeremiah in Abu Ghosh cannot be proven yet, although the paintings are qualified as being in the Comnenian style of the time¹⁹. Other Byzantine Orthodox monasteries may have profited of Manuel's generosity and of the presence of Greek artists in the area at the time. Suggestions have been made about Manuel's involvement in the restoration of the Monastery of St Euthymius in Judaea and the Laura of Calamon²⁰.

Even more important is the emperor's patronage of the Great Laura of St Sabas, the spiritual and intellectual centre of the Greek Orthodox patriarchate of Jerusalem, southeast of Jerusalem. In a text, which has been overlooked so far, Manuel Comnenus is said to have founded the church of the monastery. The passage is found in an undated description of the Holy Land written by a Melkite, i.e. an Arab speaking and writing Byzantine Orthodox. Since the text has not been edited in Arabic so far, one has to content oneself with a translation made at the beginning of the twentieth century which has more than once been criticised. It says that 'the monastery has a beautiful church with a cupola painted in bright azure. The founder of this church was the pious king Manuel Porphyrogenitus'. As long as a good edition of the Arabic text, with a translation, is not available one cannot draw definite conclusions. The emperor, however, is not likely to have had to rebuild the entire church. He may have sponsored its restoration²¹. John Phocas does not refer to Manuel's patronage.

Last but not least is Manuel's patronage of the Church of the Sepulchre in Jerusalem. According to John Phocas, the Byzantine emperor made a gift of gold mosaics for the shrine of the Sepulchre, for the stone on which Christ had been laid²². Repair works also seem to have taken place under his patronage. Such patronage in Jerusalem was not uncommon for Byzantine emperors who were the protectors of the Christians in Jerusalem before the arrival of the Latins. During the crusader period, however, it was a great opportunity for a Byzantine emperor to be involved in such projects, expressing his interest in the church and stepping into the footsteps of his predecessors as a religious leader. Politics and image building went hand in hand, and the emperor could pose as the benefactor of Christendom itself.

Manuel Comnenus was actively engaged in patronizing restoration works and the decoration of churches and monasteries in the Holy Land. It is therefore most remarkable that, at least according to the silence in the sources which have been preserved, he is not known to have sponsored any construction or restoration work or have commissioned any liturgical object for an institution in the Principality of Antioch. The city must have been for him the place par excellence to pose as its benefactor, especially after his glorious entry in 1159. One can hardly imagine that he did not take the chance to leave a permanent mark of his lawful rulership.

¹⁸ Delaville Le Roulx 1894, I, no. 443, 306-308; Hamilton 1980, 182-183; Mayer 1967, 175-176; Pringle 1993, 95-101; Riley-Smith 1967, 52, 393, 437 n. 1.

¹⁹ Kühnel 1994, 52-54; Pringle 1993, I, 7-17, who speaks of their Comnenian style and refers to the cooperation between Amalric and Manuel Comnenus; Weyl Carr 1982.

²⁰ John Phocas does not mention his emperor's patronage, possibly because the restoration works were less conspicuous, *PG* 133, cc. 949-950, 951-952 (Wilkinson/Hill/Ryan 1988, 328-331; Külzer 1994, 298-301). For St Euthymius, see Pringle 1998, 230; Runciman 1971, II, 392. For the Laura of Calamon, see Pringle, 1993, 197; de Vailhé 1898-1899, 116-117. Equally uncertain is Manuel's patronage of the Greek Orthodox church of St John the Baptist in Sebaste (Samaria), see Hunt 1982, 196.

²¹ De Lébédew 1902, 30; cf. Pringle 1998, 258-266. I hope to come back to the subject.

²² John Phocas, *PG* 133, 943-944 (Wilkinson/Hill/Ryan 1988, 324; Külzer 1994, 295); Kühnel 1994, 52; Lilie 1981, 200, 448 n. 230, 456 n. 276; Mayer 1967, 175f.; Pringle 2007, 30; Runciman 1971, II, 391f.

In texts pronounced by his court orators Manuel has more than once been described as an emperor who was keen on image building, whose portrait could be seen in private and public places²³.

Therefore I want to draw attention to a manuscript to which the Emperor Manuel may have been connected, possibly in a prominent role, maybe even as its commissioner. The so-called Friuli Bible is a twelfth-century Latin Bible of which the first volume has gone lost. Volume II, which is now in the Biblioteca Guarneriana in San Daniele del Friuli (some 20 km north-west of Udine, in northern Italy), where it is known as MS 3, is called the Bibbia Bizantina. The manuscript offers a selection of biblical texts: Daniel, the 12 Minor Prophets, Proverbs, the Song of Songs, the Book of Wisdom, Ecclesiastes, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Job, Tobit, Judith, 1 and 2 Esdras, 1 and 2 Maccabees, Acts of the Apostles, the Canonical Epistles, the Apocalypse and the Pauline Epistles. It is a so-called giant Bible, measuring 52.8 cm × 34.8 cm, the written format being 39.7 cm × 23 cm, in two columns of 44 lines each. According to Dr Venuti, the parchment used is sheepskin²⁴. Such Bibles were meant for public use, rather than for private devotion and, taking into account the weight and the size of the volume, was meant to be handled and used by a male rather than by a female reader.

The manuscript is lavishly illustrated although a considerable number of the original miniatures have gone missing which, according to Dr Venuti, should have occurred around 1700.

A good description of the manuscript could help to 'restore' the original decoration programme that might give information about typically Byzantine subjects that could have been part of it, like the Dormition of the Virgin etc. The Ascension of Christ (fol. 184r) has partially disappeared but may be indicative for its artistic origin. The manuscript thanks its surname Bibbia Bizantina to the Byzantine and byzantinizing character of its miniatures. The Greek captions in some of these illustrations may have played a role as well for this qualification. The manuscript has been dated to various periods in the twelfth century (see below).

In spite of the loss of many miniatures, E.B. Garrison considered the Bible of Friuli nevertheless as 'still incomparably rich in decoration', and 'perhaps the finest Latin manuscript of the Mediterranean area in its general period', and of 'extraordinary quality'. J. Folda, one of the last art historians to deal with the manuscript, speaks of a 'work of art of the highest quality'²⁵. The possible donor portrait, normally depicted at the beginning of a text, should have figured at the beginning of Volume I, and thus seems to have gone lost. The second volume does not have, or does no longer have, a colophon, which does not facilitate research on this Bible either²⁶. Volume II, the now surviving part of the Friuli Bible, begins with the Book of Daniel. In the margin of fol. 2r, at the beginning of the Book of Daniel, after an introduction to this Bible book, we find an interesting person. We see a ruler dressed as a Byzantine emperor, interpreted by V. Pace as representing Nebuchadnezzar. Could this portrait not be a reminder of the donor, possibly depicted already in Volume I, and whose portrait is repeated at the beginning of the first Bible book of Volume II?²⁷

So far it seemed impossible to propose a patron for this manuscript. From the above it is clear that a detailed description of the manuscript has still to be made, the quires, the place of the cuttings, corrections and other additions, the pigments etc. If it is possible to determine which miniatures may have disappeared, it may be easier to find parallels with the illustration programme of other Bibles, Latin and Greek, which might help to determine if the Friuli Bible follows a western or an eastern programme.

In the present article I would like to highlight an illustration which, like so many other illuminations in the manuscript, has never been discussed in

²³ See n. 14 *supra*.

²⁴ The approx. 508 folios of the two volumes of the Bible in its original state must have cost a fortune. There must have been a regular supply of parchment to the scriptorium where the Bible was produced. For parchment see e.g. *ODB* 3, 1587. Examples cited here are given from earlier studies where the foliation is not always identical; Pace 1979, 131; and Folda 1995, 598-599, who so far has given the best survey of the contents of the manuscript and its miniatures. The Cini collection in Venice has an almost complete selection of black and white photographs of which they gave me generously. Lack of time in early 2006 prevented me from studying them all. I owe the information about the Cini collection to Tasha Vorderstrasse.

²⁵ Folda 1995, 463; Garrison 1957-1958, 178, 301. Such a manuscript deserves to be examined by an expert who may give a full description of it and should analyse the pigments used in this Bible.

²⁶ For donor portraits in Byzantium, see *ODB* 3, 1705-1706.

²⁷ Folda 1995, 599; Pace 1979, Fig. 1.



Pl. 1. Bible, Biblioteca Guarneriana, San Daniele, MS 3, mounted ruler, fol. 156v
(courtesy of the Biblioteca Guarneriana, San Daniele del Friuli)

detail. At the beginning of 1 Maccabees, on fol. 156v, under the bar with the name of the new section, i.e. INCIPIT LIBER MACABEORVI (sic), the initial E of the beginning of the Book of Maccabees ('Et factum est') represents a horseman (Pl. 1). He has the paraphernalia of a ruler, but without a caption, which could, or should, have indicated a

Maccabean leader. According to J. Folda we see here a 'mounted king'. For 1 Maccabees this is an unknown iconography. Seeing the miniature for the first time, in an enlarged form on the dust jacket of J. Folda's book, *The Art of the Crusaders in the Holy Land, 1098-1187*, published in 1995, it struck me as being Byzantine in character and representation.

The artist will have been Byzantine or a painter who had been trained in a Greek atelier, or someone who was otherwise very strongly influenced by Byzantine art. Furthermore, the picture itself reminds one immediately of a Byzantine ruler²⁸. At the same time one wonders why such a Byzantine or byzantinizing miniature was chosen for a book cover which deals with Crusader art. It was certainly the beauty and the colourfulness of the miniature, its golden background, the fierce red colour and the various shades of blue, and not to forget the ruler himself who, in an imposing attitude, is seated frontally and is overlooking the audience with a biased regard, that made the picture so attractive for a book cover. Crusader art is so interesting and of cultural importance because it was created amidst various cultures, languages and beliefs.

The initial E (beginning the phrase *Et factum est*, in itself almost a message) has a majestic colouring of red and gold, and is depicted in the form of a round Greek epsilon. Its equivalent occurs in western and eastern manuscripts. One sees a horseman, mounted on a sort of purple coloured horse, who rides from left to right. At the same time he is seated on the golden middle bar of the E, as if this were a throne. With his left hand he holds the reins of his horse, in his right hand he holds a sceptre. On his head he has a jewelled diadem and he is clad in a blue tunic of various shades of blue, on top of which he wears a fierce red coloured cloak which is floating behind him, showing a rider in action. A precious clasp holds the cloak together. The rider has scarlet boots on his feet. The rest of the E is covered with floral stems in blue and green, with here and there a red, blue (and green?) flower on a golden back-

ground. At the left the middle bar of the E merges into a pattern of blue interlace. The opposite end of the middle bar, i.e. the open end to the right, ends into an interlace pattern of green, blue and red. The other ends of the E have an interlace pattern of gold on a red background. The frame around the E has a golden background with a diaper pattern of quatrefoils in green, red and light blue which reminds one of the background of Byzantine gold enamels.

The mounted person has a dark complexion, dark hair and a short dark beard. He is frontally seated on his horse in an authoritarian pose, although slightly turning away his gaze. He succeeds in imposing his presence upon the audience, the beholders and users of this Bible, a liturgical book, which was to be seen and to be used by various people.

Folda described him as a 'mounted king'. In the context of Crusader art one should therefore ask the question which king should be represented here, at the beginning of 1 Maccabees. A king or ruler of the Maccabees is not very likely to have been depicted here, taking into consideration the iconography of the Books of Maccabees. Considering that Crusader art was produced in Outremer, in the Holy Land as the title of the book has defined and limited the subject, one may exclude the possibility that here a Latin king of Jerusalem is depicted since Latin rulers in Outremer did not grow beards. The same goes for the princes of Antioch, except for its early rulers who were Normans from southern Italy and who are not likely to have played a role, directly or indirectly, in the story of the Maccabees in the context of Antiochene history. Beards were the monopoly of Greeks and other eastern Christians. Only the Greeks had crowned rulers at the time. The first Armenian prince to be crowned was Leon the Magnificent who was crowned king in Tarsus in 1198²⁹. This leaves us with the possibility that the miniature is the portrait of a Byzantine emperor. An interesting feature of this miniature is that historiated initials were not very popular in Byzantium. They had been introduced from the West, and rulers are not known to have figured in them. They never served as column-wide headpieces. It is therefore an interesting phenomenon to see a Byzantine emperor in a Latin setting, in the most literal sense of the word³⁰.

My first impression that we see here the picture of a Byzantine ruler needs further corroboration. By scrutinizing the enlarged photograph on the book cover one discovers a curious phenomenon. Around

²⁸ Folda 1995, dust jacket, ca 18 cm × 16 cm. The colour plate in the book itself, no. 38, measures 6-6.7 cm (w.) × 7 cm (h.). For the real size, 11 cm × 12.1 cm, see Folda 1995, 599 (plate 10.20 is a black and white photograph). The other colour plates of the Friuli Bible (nos 37, 39, 40) are equally published in reduced format. For the text of the Incipit, see Catalogue Udine 1972, Pl. 6 (top left), which may have been done by a non-Latin illuminator; Tavano 1979, Fig. 1, seems to interpret the horseman as a Maccabean leader. Thanks to the kindness of the librarian of the NINO (The Netherlands Institute for the Near East), Leiden, I was able to study the dust jacket which had been carefully preserved to protect the book. For the iconography of the Maccabees see n. 45 *infra*.

²⁹ Ciggaar 2006, 268-278; Mutafian 1993, 44, 152.

³⁰ Franc-Sgourdéou 1967, unfortunately without illustrations; Krause 2004, 143-162; *ODB* 2, 995.

the head of the mounted ruler one sees a nimbus, subtly painted within the pattern of floral stems. The halo is not easily seen on a black and white photograph, let alone on a reduced colour plate³¹.

The outfit of the mounted person, the *imperialia*, i.e. the halo, the sceptre, the red stockings, the frontality and also the representation as a horse rider, they all confirm that the represented person is depicted conform the iconography of a Byzantine emperor³². They were usually represented with a nimbus and addressed with the qualification 'Holy Emperor' as we have seen already. They were God's representatives on earth, the thirteenth apostle, and therefore they deserved to be represented with a halo. Even their palace was a sacred palace, 'sacrum palatium', as we read in William of Tyre's *Chronicon*³³.

It is tempting to try an identification of the emperor in the Friuli Bible, depicted in a miniature with such modest dimensions. But first the miniature and the manuscript have to be considered in their proper context: the date, the *ductus*, the style of the miniatures, the format and the selection of Bible books before one can discuss the patron, the artists' atelier and the destination. This is not an easy thing to do and only a few aspects can be considered here. So far art historians have mostly spoken in general terms about the Friuli Bible. An attempt to bring together the various suggestions may nevertheless help us to get a better view of the manuscript and eventually discover its historical context. This may help and stimulate further research on the other miniatures, their style, their colour palette and their iconography.

It has been agreed that the *ductus* of the manuscript is French. This does not immediately provide a direct link between a Byzantine emperor and an atelier where French scribes were active, although the Latin communities in Constantinople and other major cities in the Byzantine Empire had their scriptoria for commercial activities and for the local religious institutions³⁴. For art historians who studied the Friuli Bible, the location of the scriptorium and the workshop responsible for its illumination were puzzling. H. Buchthal suggested Sicily, V. Pace saw a link with southern Italy; E.B. Garrison, S. Bettini and L.-A. Hunt were inclined to see Jerusalem as the place where the production of the Bible took place³⁵. C. Furlan suggested that the illuminator was of Constantinopolitan origin³⁶. Most recently J. Folda has drawn attention to Antioch, or

rather to an Antiochene context, not ruling out the possibility that the workshop was to be located in Tripoli or Cyprus, but without giving arguments³⁷.

The unique character of the Friuli Bible has no parallels, in style or in iconography, thus preventing to draw more definite conclusions as for the dating. Various dates and periods have been proposed, from the middle of the twelfth century to the late twelfth century, without solid arguments. For the hypothesis that the manuscript was written and decorated in Jerusalem, a date before 1187, the capture of Jerusalem by Saladin, is acceptable. But again such a hypothesis needs more corroborative arguments³⁸. Some of these dates fall within the long

³¹ Folda 1995, was the first to publish the miniature in colour; for a black and white photograph, see e.g. Garrison 1957-1958, Fig. 225, who erroneously gives fol. 154v. On the black and white photograph in Pace 1979, Fig. 12, and Tavano 1979, Fig. 1, the halo is visible.

³² Mounted emperors were no exception. For the statue of Justinian (527-565) in front of St Sophia, see Janin 1964, 74-75; for Basil II on horseback, described by Psellos, see Cutler 1968, 114; for Isaac II Angelus (1185-1195) described by Prodhromos, see Magdalino/Nelson 1982, 154-160. For the use of haloes in the iconography of Byzantine emperors, see e.g. *ODB* 3, 1487.

³³ William of Tyre, *Chronicon*, XVIII, 24 (Huygens 1986, II, 846). Frederick Barbarossa, contemporary and political opponent of Manuel Comnenus, was occasionally represented with a nimbus and his palace was sometimes called the 'sacred palace', as if to counterbalance Manuel's prerogatives.

³⁴ For the French *ductus*, see e.g. Folda 1995, 466 and Garrison 1957-1958, 302; Manuel Comnenus employed Hospitallers living in Constantinople for missions to the Pope, Magdalino 1993, 222. The *ductus* of the Friuli Bible should nevertheless be included in a future corpus of Crusader manuscripts. The publication of some of the miniatures included part of the written text.

³⁵ Buchthal 1957, 103-104, was the first to draw attention to the Byzantine flavour of the manuscript and the synthesis of Latin, Byzantine and other elements; Bettini 1972, *passim*; Garrison 1957-1958, *passim*; Hunt 1991a, 355-356; Pace 1979, *passim*; Tavano 1979 and *idem* 1987, *passim*.

³⁶ Catalogue Udine 1972, no. 6; Furlan 1972, 119-123 (inaccessible, see Bettini 1972, 184). However, an artist trained in Constantinople could have worked in any place.

³⁷ Folda 1995, 466; *idem* 1995a, 150; *idem* 1997, 302; *idem* 2005, 582 n. 377.

³⁸ Bettini 1972, 183-184, 'metà del secolo XII', who speaks about the absorption of the style of Manuel Comnenus; Buchthal 1957, 103, late twelfth century; Garrison 1957-1958, middle of the twelfth century; Hunt 1991a, 356, late twelfth century; Pace 1979, 153, in the 1190s ('al XII secolo exeunte'). Folda 1995a, gives no date; *idem* 1995, 466, before or after 1187; Folda 2005, 582 n. 377, becomes more specific by suggesting a date just before 1187.

reign of Manuel Comnenus who ruled from 1143 to 1180. The reign of his successor, his infant son Alexius II Comnenus (1180-1183), can safely be excluded from the identification, and the same goes for Andronikos I Comnenus (1183-1185), a fervent anti-Latin emperor who would not have considered commissioning a Latin Bible. The chaotic period until 1204 was not appropriate for sympathetic contacts with the Latin States in Outremer and patronage in grand style.

We have seen that Manuel sponsored the rebuilding, the restoration and (re)decoration of churches and monasteries in the Latin States in Outremer. He shared patronage with King Amalric of Jerusalem for the restoration of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. One cannot exclude that he also sponsored *liturgica*, meant for the Latin States in Outremer, such as liturgical books, Psalters, Bibles, Gospel books etc.

Contemporaries have described more than once the physiognomy of Manuel Comnenus. This was helpful for artists who had to paint the portrait of the emperor and who did not have direct access to existing specimens. For the Latin States in Outremer this was probably not the case as we have seen since his portrait was easily accessible in Bethlehem, at least from the late 1160s onwards. For the identification of the emperor in the Friuli Bible the descriptions by Byzantine contemporaries are important. Generally speaking we do not have much information on the physiognomy of Byzantine emperors, let alone that their portraits have survived the centuries. We know that Manuel's portrait was widely available or had been available in the palaces and in the houses of the aristocracy, in monasteries, and in public places, in Constantinople, in cities and in the

province, and even in the Latin States, in Antioch and in Bethlehem³⁹. The circulation of coins also helped to visualize certain characteristics of the emperor's face.

The only detailed and individual portrait of Manuel Comnenus which seems to have been preserved and which definitely portrays the emperor, is the well-known portrait of the emperor and his wife Maria of Antioch in the *Tomos* which contains the *Acts* of the Council of 1166. At the beginning of the manuscript Vatic. Gr. 1176, on fol. IIr, we see the imperial couple as figuring in a sort of donor portrait. A colour reproduction of this miniature, where both the emperor and empress are depicted with a nimbus, does not seem to have been published. The emperor's skin seems rather dark, and his beard is short, just like his portrait on coins. Nelson and Magdalino have drawn attention to another imperial portrait that may represent the Emperor Manuel where the bearded emperor has also a dark complexion⁴⁰.

For details of the emperor's physiognomy we have to turn to the descriptions by his compatriots. The historian Nicetas Choniates describes the emperor as having a complexion not too light, nor too dark. Nicetas was an imperial secretary who may have minded his words, a dark skin not being something to be proud of in Byzantium⁴¹. Michael Italikos, in a speech of 1143 addressed to Manuel who had just been crowned emperor, describes him as being of a very dark complexion, almost black, and with blue eyes ('with the colour of the sea')⁴². In his funeral oration for the emperor, Eustathius, the archbishop of Thessalonica, describes him as having a very dark skin. The emperor had often been exercising outside, in the sunshine. By paying this compliment, almost in the form of an excuse, the colour of the skin became less important, was honourable even, and was no reason to mock the emperor as the Venetians had once done. They had let a black African mimic the emperor⁴³. For his complexion Manuel seems to have taken after his father who was described as being very dark, hence his Latin surname 'maurus'⁴⁴. As for his blue eyes Manuel may have taken after his mother, the Hungarian Irene Piroshka. If we compare the features of this 'imperial portrait' in written sources to the miniature in the Friuli Bible we see a number of parallels: a dark skin, dark hair, a short dark beard, and possibly blue eyes which, in the miniature, are tiny little dots of a bluish (?) colour. The

³⁹ Magdalino 1993, 470-477; Magdalino/Nelson 1982, 132-151; Mango 1972, 224-228.

⁴⁰ Spatharakis 1976, 208-210 (with description of the colours), and Figs 155, 156, 157. The portrait in the manuscript Modena, Mutin. Gr. 122, fol. 293v, is of a later date, but both portraits depict the emperor with a short beard, Spatharakis 1976, 172, 180, and Fig. 117b. For the portrait in Vatic. Gr. 666, fol. 1v, see Magdalino/Nelson 1982, 149-151, and Figs 8 and 9.

⁴¹ Nicetas Choniates, van Diten 1975, 51 (Bekker 1835, 69-70; Grabler 1958, *Die Krone der Komnenen*, 85-86).

⁴² Gautier 1972, 271-272, 281-282.

⁴³ Chalandon 1912, II, 329; Gautier 1972, 282 n. 21; Tafel 1852, 201.

⁴⁴ William of Tyre, *Chronicon*, XV, 23 (Huygens 1986, II, 706).

enlarged colour photograph on the cover of Folda's book hopefully renders the real colours. Only a good microscope could help to determine the colour of the eyes of the mounted ruler. In the manuscript itself it is difficult to determine the right colours.

If we accept the hypothesis that the emperor on fol. 156v is the Emperor Manuel Comnenus, one has to ask the question why the emperor should be depicted in a Latin Bible which was apparently meant to be used in a 'public' place, in a prominent church or in the chapel of a secular ruler, laying on the altar and accessible not only to the juridical owner. And why the choice for the Book of Maccabees and its initial E, and why the choice to produce a historiated initial, such a rare thing to be found in Byzantium? It is not likely that a Latin patron would have ordered a 'holy' portrait of a Byzantine emperor. Therefore one may assume that Manuel was the patron, or one of the patrons.

The choice of the Book of Maccabees, in combination with a possible donor portrait in the lost volume, may give another clue to the presence of an emperor, possibly of two emperors, in this Bible and more specifically of Manuel's patronage of it. The iconography of the Maccabees is ignored here, intentionally probably, and 'replaced' by an imperial portrait in the frontispiece to this Bible Book⁴⁵. The presence of the initial E in a rounded form, similar in the Greek and in the Latin alphabet and occurring as such in Latin and Greek manuscripts, may have been a happy coincidence, but may at the same time refer to Manuel's name in Latin: Emmanuel, the name used in the inscription in the church of Bethlehem and in correspondence with western rulers. It is the only occurring initial E in the selection of Bible texts in the Friuli Bible as we know it now, at least in the volume that has been preserved. Manuel may have played with his name when using this initial, just as he used the iconography of Christ Emmanuel on his coins. The poet Theodoros Prodromos compared the career of young Manuel Comnenus in the late 1130s, when he was sent by his father against the Persians, to the coming of Christ who likewise had brought salvation⁴⁶. By a happy coincidence the initial E may thus be a reference to the emperor's name, stressing that the Bible was meant for a Latin owner. Manuel himself is not likely to have known Latin or to have intended to use a Latin Bible.

The Book of Maccabees is the story of resistance and rebellion, of virtue and of victory. The emperor depicted here is a leader, a victorious self-assured leader, showing his imperialia. He is a saintly leader, like the military saints who are represented on horseback in the same attitude but who carry a lance in their right hand instead of a sceptre⁴⁷. Here we see an emperor, whose image building is meant to give a clear message: he is the holy military leader in command of his forces, he is the military saint *par excellence*. In speeches held at the court in Constantinople the emperor was compared to the heroes of the past, the Emperors Constantine the Great, Justinian and Nikephoros Phokas⁴⁸. Digenes Akrites, the literary hero who had lived on the Eastern border where he had defended the empire against the Arabs, was another model which Manuel had set himself to imitate and emulate. These heroes became *topoi* in the speeches to the emperor. They had been warriors, holy warriors, who had defended the empire against its enemies. Being portrayed in the pose of a military saint was appropriate and especially at the beginning of the Book of Maccabees where military leadership played a role, especially in 2 Maccabees 10:1-9, where we find the story of Judas Maccabeus who was victorious over his religious enemies⁴⁹.

One can imagine that the emperor wanted to pose as the new Judas Maccabeus, the pre-Christian hero who had been victorious over his enemies. For an emperor like Manuel Comnenus it was appropriate to be represented as a military saint, with imperialia instead of a lance. Judas

⁴⁵ For Judas Maccabeus, usually depicted as a warrior and carrying arms, see *LCI* II, 448-449; for the Maccabean brothers, *LCI* III, 142-145. See also Leroy 1964, 247-248.

⁴⁶ *ODB* 1, 438, s.v. Types of Christ. For Prodromos see Gautier 1972, 294, ll. 22, 33, 34, in a speech to the emperor, and Hörandner 1974, 309, 312. For the *topos* of Christ Emmanuel and Manuel Comnenus' deification, Magdalino 1993, 77, 434-435, 481, 487-488.

⁴⁷ Immerzeel 2003, *passim*.

⁴⁸ Magdalino 1993, 2.

⁴⁹ For Nikephoros Phokas and Digenes Akrites, Magdalino 1993, 449. In a poem of the late 1140s Prodromos wrote that Manuel was to become greater than Alexander the Great (Magdalino 1993, 447). Therefore one can exclude that Alexander the Great, who had conquered Syria, is portrayed at the beginning of 1 Maccabees, the more so since he is only depicted as a saint during the Palaeologan period (communication by C. Jolivet-Lévy, June 2007). See also Immerzeel 2003, and *ODB* 2, 1261.

Maccabeus' popularity in crusading circles and in Latin Outremer may have stimulated Manuel to have himself represented as a second Judas Maccabeus, the real one who wanted to reunite East and West. The title had already been claimed for Baldwin I, King of Jerusalem (1100-1118), witness the inscription on the king's tomb in Jerusalem⁵⁰. Image building was essential for an ambitious emperor like Manuel Comnenus. In the decoration of the initial E we may see the holy emperor as a warrior saint, the real leader, possibly with a vague hint at the other model, the model of Christ Emmanuel.

This interpretation may lead us to Antioch, to the Church of the Maccabees where the relics of the martyrs were kept. According to a late twelfth-/early thirteenth-century source, a *panegyris* (a year market) in their honour and for the benefit of their church was held there on August 1, the feast day of the Maccabees. This means that the shrine of the Maccabees attracted many pilgrims and was a popular place. We find this information in a description of Antioch, in the *Description of churches and monasteries*, which was compiled by the Coptic author Abū al-Makārim. Other contemporary sources confirm the existence of this church. The church is mentioned by twelfth-century writers who described the Holy Places, like Rorgo Fretellus⁵¹.

Is the miniature with the imperial horseman an allusion to the political situation in Antioch? Does it reflect the final victory of the saintly ruler who was lord and master of Antioch? If so, we have to look for an addressee in Antioch to receive such a de

luxé Bible, and for an occasion appropriate for such a lavishly illustrated Bible. The Church of the Maccabees was not likely to be the candidate for such a Bible. Nothing is known about its denomination or its clergy or its role in Antiochene history. The same goes for the Greek patriarch of Antioch, Athanasius III (1165-1170), who should not have had a great interest in a Latin Bible where the Gospels were not included, unless he had to pose it upon the altar side by side with a Greek Bible to mark the unity of the churches of East and West. One may equally rule out the Greek patriarchs of Jerusalem of the twelfth century who resided elsewhere. The Latin patriarch of Antioch, Aimery of Limoges, was not a likely candidate to receive such a Bible either. His presence in Antioch had been a thorn in the eyes of Manuel Comnenus, and possibly remained so after 1170. The gift of such a Bible would rather have given the impression that Aimery's presence in Antioch was accepted or was even legitimated by the emperor. This leaves us, as far as Antioch is concerned, with a secular ruler of the time. Four rulers of Antioch should be considered: Raymond of Poitiers (1136-1149), King Baldwin III of Jerusalem as regent for the Princess Constance (1149-1153), Reynald of Châtillon (1153-1160) and Bohemond III (1163-1201). The latter was, like his predecessors, liegeman of the emperor. More importantly he was brother-in-law of the Byzantine emperor. His two predecessors had had serious conflicts with the emperor as we have seen already, hardly allowing the sending of a precious gift or an exchange of gifts. As regent of Antioch, King Baldwin III of Jerusalem is not known to have been in contact with Constantinople, whereas Constance appealed to Manuel, her suzerain, to find her a suitable husband, a project that eventually failed to materialize⁵².

Between 1163, year of Bohemond III's accession to power, and 1180, year of Manuel's death, several occasions were suitable for making important gifts. The beginning of Bohemond III's reign offered such an opportunity, but also the year 1165 when Bohemond III, prisoner of Nureddin, was released from captivity with the help of Manuel and visited Constantinople. One can imagine that, at that occasion, Bohemond may (again) have had to pledge the oath of allegiance, a good occasion for the suzerain to accentuate his political and ecclesiastical leadership, the more so because the reinstalment of the Greek patriarch was now definitely settled. The

⁵⁰ For Baldwin I's tomb in Jerusalem, Folda 1995, 74-75, Pl. 4.19 ('Rex Baldevinus: Iudas alter Machabeus'). For Crusader interest in the Maccabees, see Dunbabin 1985, and Fischer 2006.

⁵¹ Ten Hacken 2006, 200-202; Troupeau 2001, 320, 324-325, suggests that the information comes from Agapius, Melkite Bishop of Manbiğ in the tenth century. For the *panegyris* in general, see Vryonis 1981. Majeska 1984, 286, thinks that these relics left Antioch some time before 1200, which may be of interest for the information about Antioch used by Abū al-Makārim. For Rorgo Fretellus, see Boeren 1980, 21, 76 (before 1147; dated to 1137/1138 by Hiestand 1994, 31); see also Maraval 2004, 341. In Constantinople there were only two churches dedicated to the Maccabees on which not much information exists (Janin 1969, 313-314; Maraval 2004, 406). It may be of interest to note that the choice of Bible books includes Ezra, whose tomb was in Antioch; see ten Hacken 2006, 204, 213.

⁵² Runciman 1971, II, 331-333.

princely palace in Antioch had its own chapel where several chaplains were active, suggesting that the chapel was more than just a chapel for private devotion. It is not known if the earthquake caused damage to the princely chapel and its liturgical books. If so one should expect the gift of a complete Bible which would have included the Gospels, and the same goes, I think, for a Bible as a marriage gift⁵³.

In an Antiochene context the Greek captions of some of the miniatures of the Friuli Bible are of interest. The cathedral of Antioch was dedicated to St Peter, patron saint of the city and bringer of Christianity to its inhabitants. Another church was dedicated to St Peter and St Paul, whose feast day was June 29, the day of the earthquake of 1170. In a miniature with St Peter one finds a Greek caption (fol. 203v) at the beginning of the Epistles of Petrus I. St Paul too has a Greek caption (fol. 206v) at the beginning of the Epistle to the Romans, as does St John (fol. 223r), at the beginning of John II. Churches in Constantinople, dedicated to St Peter or St Paul or to both saints were few in number⁵⁴. Other captions in Greek may have disappeared when the manuscript was robbed of a number of its illuminations, and this goes of course also for the first volume of the Friuli Bible.

As a possible addressee the royal court of Jerusalem should not be excluded altogether. At the official entry into Antioch the king of Jerusalem, Baldwin III, received rich gifts that may have included *liturgica* and liturgical books. In an Antiochene context, however, the Bible could have made a nice gift for a ruler for whom Manuel's suzerainty was no longer in question and who had to be 'pacified' in a way. By showing who was the ruler of Antioch, although subtly 'hiding' his haloed identity, and by stressing some accents of Antiochene history, such as the Maccabees, St Peter and St Paul, the emperor could pose as the suzerain of the Antiochene ruler⁵⁵.

From the remaining second volume of this Bible, and specifically from the miniature on fol. 156v, one may carefully conclude that Manuel Comnenus played a role in the patronage of this Bible. Antioch may have been its destination, and more in particular Bohemond III who was in more than one way related to the Greek emperor⁵⁶. The somewhat 'disguised' nimbus may have been a political choice in order not to frustrate too much its future owner, be it Bohemond III whose sister Maria of Antioch was also entitled to a nimbus as we have seen in the

Tomos' portrait, be it another influential person or institution.

Such a hypothesis leaves unanswered the question where the manuscript was produced. If Manuel was the sole patron of the Bible, he may have commissioned it in Constantinople from a Latin scriptorium with 'guest artists' to decorate the Bible with Byzantine and byzantinizing pictures. He could also have ordered it from a scriptorium elsewhere, in Outremer, in Jerusalem for example, and even in Antioch itself where a variety of churches and scriptoria were in existence. Even the Black Mountain area offered a variety of monasteries of various denominations where Greek and Armenian, and even Syriac elements, could easily be incorporated into this 'finest Latin manuscript of the Mediterranean area in its general period', to

⁵³ The princely chapel had a certain importance since three chaplains witnessed a diploma in 1140, Bresc-Bautier 1984, 178, no. 76, ('Willelmus Brachetus et Aimericus atque Willelmus Pictaviensis, capellani scilicet palatii').

⁵⁴ Pace 1979, Fig. 18 (fol. 223r). In one of his letters (I, 2, vv. 13-14) St Peter admonishes the inhabitants of Asia and neighbouring areas to submit to the emperor (βασιλεύς in the Greek text). Do we find here a hidden message to the inhabitants of Antioch to submit to the then reigning Byzantine emperor, the real Roman emperor who had ambitions to rule East and West? It is remarkable that Manuel Comnenus was portrayed on an icon with St Peter and St Paul and other celestial authorities, Magdalino/Nelson 1982, 147-148. For churches in Constantinople, Janin 1969, 393, 397-401. For the Greek captions in the Friuli Bible, see also n. 24 *supra*.

⁵⁵ See n. 11. For the Kingdom of Jerusalem one should also consider Baldwin III's marriage with Theodora, a niece of Manuel, as an occasion to send a Bible in Latin, although a Gospel Book would probably have been more welcome. The two Greek queens of Jerusalem, scions of the Comnenian dynasty, were probably literate ladies.

⁵⁶ One cannot entirely exclude the possibility that the Friuli Bible was meant for the Church of Bethlehem to 'complete' Manuel's patronage. In that case the Bible should have contained a miniature with the Nativity scene. However, if the Buchanan Bible found its inspiration in the Friuli Bible, as suggested by Hunt 1991a, it is more likely that the Bible was on view in Antioch than in Bethlehem. In Antioch good relations existed between the Latins and the Syriac Orthodox Church. The Syriac Orthodox Patriarch Michael the Syrian, whose official residence was in Antioch, had good contacts with Aimery of Limoges, which may have facilitated the access of Syrian artists to the princely chapel, if that was its destination. A marriage gift for a Comnenian bride in Antioch or in Jerusalem should have contained the Gospels, especially if these ladies were literate. The size of the Bible, however, does not seem to have been appropriate for such an occasion.

quote again the words of Garrison. Even Cilicia, where Armenian scriptoria produced beautiful manuscripts, could have contributed to its execution. The mixed character of the Bible may intentionally have been aimed by its patron who wanted to give a Bible with an 'ecumenical' character and a political statement. If Manuel was indeed its patron, the Friuli Bible has to be dated before 1180.

For the time being the mystery of the Bible's provenance, i.e. where it came from before its arrival in northern Italy, has to remain in suspense. If indeed the Bible had been in the possession of Bohemond III, lay brother of the Hospital, one wonders if the Bible may have come into Hospitaller hands. Bohemond III bequeathed his weaponry to the Hospital, and hoped that he would be buried in their church⁵⁷. If so the Bible may have been salvaged before the capture of Antioch by Baibars and have come to the West when the Hospital retired from the Holy Land.

The presence of an aniconic element, the so-called eight-starred Cross of Jerusalem (two interlaced squares), for example on fol. 207r, asks for a small excursus, even if it does not occur in the imperial miniature at the beginning of 1 Maccabees. This decorative element was indeed used in manuscripts produced in Jerusalem, as L.-A. Hunt already stated in her article on the Buchanan Bible. She suggested that the Buchanan Bible drew inspiration from the Friuli Bible. According to J. Folda, however, this decorative element was not confined to Jerusalem but was used elsewhere in Outremer, in the eastern Mediterranean⁵⁸.

Generally speaking one could conclude that in the Friuli Bible the best of East and West were united. If the hypothesis that Manuel was the

patron or was one of the patrons of the Friuli Bible is right, this patronage fills an important gap of Manuel's dealings in Outremer. At the same time it casts a new light on Byzantine politics in the Latin States and more specifically on the politics in the Principality of Antioch. There was more than one occasion in the history of the Principality of Antioch, which justified the giving of such an interesting Bible, though still puzzling as for its real message⁵⁹. A certain preference for an addressee in Antioch seems justified because of the feudal bond between Constantinople and Antioch, the highlighting of the Book of Maccabees with an impressive ruler, and the multi-ethnic and multi-cultural character of the city, reflected in the Bible itself. Only a good edition of all the miniatures of the Friuli Bible in colour, in real and enlarged form, by preference on CD-Rom, may reveal more hidden clues to the mystery of this *Bibbia Bizantina*.

Eventually the question arises if the Friuli Bible should still be considered as a specimen of Crusader art, when the patron was a Byzantine Orthodox emperor who possibly engaged a mixed team of artisans and artists to produce this unique Bible. Folda's suggestion that 'These characteristics [i.e. elegant script, rich decoration, outstanding quality, the colouring reminding Armenian miniature painting, the highlighting of colours, choice of colours] taken together demonstrate why this codex is so difficult to localize. They strongly suggest a Crusader origin for this manuscript'. This conclusion betrays a sparkle of doubt about the Crusader origin of this manuscript⁶⁰. Since the Friuli Bible remains an enigma, this should be an invitation to reconsider this Bible in a wider eastern Mediterranean context, politically and ecclesiastically⁶¹.

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⁵⁷ Cahen 1940, 515 n. 28; Delaville Le Roulx 1894, I, no. 948, p. 600 (1193). The Bible's history in northern Italy is not yet clear, see Catalogue Udine 1972, 57, and Casarsa, d'Angelo and Scaloni 1991, 6 (with special thanks to Dr Zorzi of the Biblioteca Marciana, Venice, who referred me to this publication). It is not known how the Bible came into the possession of the Patriarch of Aquileia, from where it came into the library of Guarnerio d'Artegna.

⁵⁸ Hunt 1991a, 355, and for an illustration of this element, Hunt 1991a, Pl. 41; Catalogue Udine 1972, fol. 207r, Pl. 6c. See also Folda 1995, 465, for comments.

⁵⁹ I hope to come back to this aspect of the Friuli Bible.

⁶⁰ Folda 1995, 466.

⁶¹ Pace 1987, *passim*.

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*'New' Discoveries at Dayr Qubbat al-Hawâ, Aswan: Architecture, Wall Paintings and Dates**

Renate DEKKER

To my friend, Maarten Heremans (†10 May 2008)

This contribution examines the discoveries that were made in 1998 by the Supreme Council of Antiquities on the site of Dayr Qubbat al-Hawâ in Aswan¹. At the time, the area to the north of the church in front of the ancient tomb of Khunes was cleared from debris and parts of a building, wall paintings and numerous Coptic as well as Arabic texts came to light².

Already in 1985, Peter Grossmann noted 'ein kleiner hoch verschütteter Kuppelraum' to the north of the church, but did not include it in his ground plan, since it – in his opinion – was not part of the church proper³. He reconstructed the latter building as an 'Achtstützenbau'⁴.

More recently, Gawdat Gabra briefly described the wall paintings and published photographs of them⁵. He localized an impressive two-zoned composition in the apse in the west wall of the church (instead of the northern building), and six standing figures on the west wall of the room to the north of the apse. Five figures with square nimbi were depicted.

The Coptic and Arabic texts were not photographed or recorded systematically, and no report of their discovery is as yet available. This is even more regrettable, since they were left exposed to the sun and the heat, so that they are likely to deteriorate and become hardly legible in the future⁶. Gawdat Gabra, nevertheless, noted a Coptic dipinto dated A.M. 896, that is A.D. 1179/1180, which was written on a layer of plaster that was applied over the painted layer, and concluded that the murals were executed before this date⁷.

On 4 December 2005 I visited the site and made photographs of the remains of the building, the paintings and several of the Coptic texts to the north of the church. Among these texts are two graffiti with identical dates and the dipinto noted by Gawdat Gabra, and a long dated dipinto in the same building (see below). I did not have the opportunity to examine the Arabic texts.

In the first part of this preliminary survey of the finds at Dayr Qubbat al-Hawâ, a new ground plan will be presented. It shows how the northern building is related to the church which Grossmann examined, and indicates the murals and the texts. Then, a first study of the murals in the apse and the long room is presented, followed by an examination of the dated graffiti and dipinti and their relation to the architecture and the paintings. These lines of research will contribute to a new history of Dayr Qubbat al-Hawâ.

* I would like to express my gratitude to the scholars who have helped me with writing this paper. Peter Grossmann made valuable suggestions for the interpretation of the architecture. Gertrud van Loon provided biographical help in the case of the wall paintings. Jitse H.F. Dijkstra (University of Ottawa), who visited the monastery in November 2002, kindly gave me permission to use his photographs, which show some of the Coptic texts in a slightly better state than mine, and had constructive remarks on several matters. Zuzana Skalova provided me with some valuable suggestions.

¹ For Dayr Qubbat al-Hawâ, named after the tomb of Shaykh Ali Abû 'l-Hawâ on top of the cliff, see Coquin/Martin 1991, 850-851; Edel 1966, 48-55; *idem* 2008; Grossmann 1985, 339-348; *idem* 1991, 851-852; de Morgan 1894, 158-162; Timm 1991, V, 2160-2161.

² For brief discussions of the discoveries, cf. Gabra 2002, 105-107, Figs 10.1-7; *idem* 2004, 1074-1075, Figs 2-3; Kamel/Naguib 2003, 170-177 (including remarks on the content of the Coptic inscriptions, but without transcriptions or translations); van Loon, in Gabra/van Loon 2007, 308-309.

³ Grossmann 1985, 342; see also Grossmann 1991, 852.

⁴ Grossmann 1985, 339-348, Fig. 2; *idem* 1991, 851-852. Other examples of octagon-domed buildings are the churches of Dayr Anbâ Hadrâ and Dayr al-Kûbâniyah, which are both located in the region of Aswan, cf. Grossmann 1982, 7-13, 54-60; *idem* 2002, 92, 560-565.

⁵ Gabra 2002, 107, Figs 10.3-10.6; *idem* 2004, Figs 1 and 2; cf. van Loon 2006, 99, n. 58.

⁶ Gabra 2004, 1074. On the damage done to the paintings since 1998, see n. 37 *infra*.

⁷ Gabra 2002, 107, Fig. 10.7; *idem* 2004, 1075.

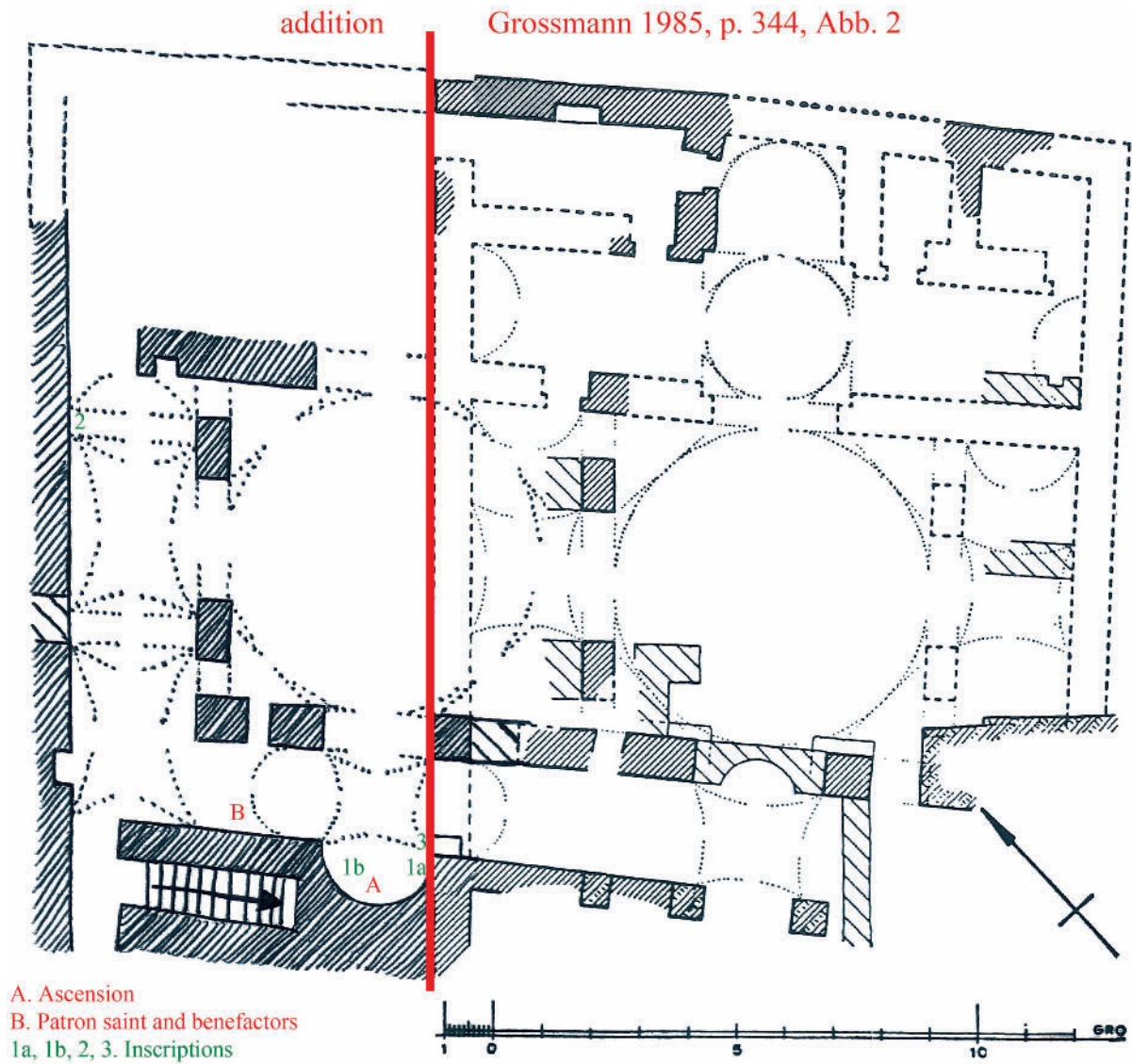


Fig. 1. Adapted plan of the church of Dayr Qubbat al-Hawâ (author)

A NEW GROUND PLAN OF THE CHURCH (OR CHURCHES?)

In order to update Grossmann's ground plan of the church, I have compared the photographs published by him in 1985⁸ with the ones taken by me in 2005. Since the new plan is not based on measurements, it must be considered provisional (Fig. 1).

⁸ Grossmann 1985, Pls I-III.

⁹ Grossmann 1985, Pl. I b. For a plan of the tomb of Khunes, cf. de Morgan 1894, 158.

¹⁰ Grossmann 1985, Pls II and III.

One of Grossmann's photographs shows the north-eastern rock-cut pillars in the hall of the tomb of Khunes and secondary stone walls between some of them, which together formed the west wall of the church⁹. Noteworthy are the diagonal layers of stone to the right of the stone wall at the far right, just below a fallen block of masonry. Grossmann assumed that this was the north-western corner of the church. In front of the west wall is a mudbrick wall between stone pillars. Other photographs show the lower parts of two stone pillars in the northern part of the church, and a doorway in the area to the sanctuary¹⁰.



Pl. 1. View on the area uncovered in 1998 (photograph author, 2005)

A more recent photograph (Pl. 1) presents a view on the area that was uncovered in 1998. Visible are the mudbrick wall (left, foreground), the northernmost rock-cut pillar of the tomb as well as the stone walls flanking it (left, background), and the lower parts of the northern stone pillars (close to the edge of the pit on the foreground)¹¹. The diagonal layers of stone appear to be part of the construction backing the mudbrick conch of the apse with the two-zoned composition (Pl. 2). To the north of the apse are the barrel-vaulted room with the row of figures opposite a construction of three stone pillars arranged in a corner and connected by mudbrick arches (Pl. 3). Remains of a squinch are visible on the inner side. North of the barrel-vaulted room is the north-western bay of the building, which used to be covered by a hanging vault (Pl. 4). A door in the west wall of this bay leads to a rock-cut staircase that runs parallel to the barrel-vaulted room. At the west end of the north wall of the building one can see an arched niche with a bottom sunk into the floor. In the same wall, west of the centre, there is also a rectangular opening with a straight lintel, which is closed by a mudbrick wall (Pl. 1).

It seems to be too low to serve as an entrance to the building, but it may have led to a room on a lower level¹². To the east of the pillar construction are an isolated stone pillar and, at a short distance, a wall that runs perpendicular to the north wall (Pl. 5). The building extended further east, but no remains of its east wall are recognizable¹³.

The addition of these constructions to Grossmann's reconstruction results in the plan of another church, which is slightly irregular: the walls running north-south are parallel to the cliff face, whereas those running east-west deviate in a northerly direction¹⁴. The naos of the church consisted of an almost

¹¹ The huge pit in the area of the nave of the church is the result of the clearing of the entrance to Khunes' tomb during the excavation by E. Edel in 1963 (see Edel 1966, 54; Grossmann, 1985, 340).

¹² I do not remember traces of a staircase. If there was a room, it may have been a baptistery or a chapel.

¹³ Pl. 5 shows that the area east of the transverse wall is higher than the one west of it, which might imply that there are still some structures covered under the sand. A future excavation can confirm or reject this supposition.



Pl. 2. The western apse of the later church (photograph author, 2005)

square nave, surrounded by a pair of pillars on the north, west and south sides, with additional pillars in the western corners, and by aisles on the north and west sides, which formed an ambulatory. No remains of a southern aisle were noted (that is in the area of the pit in front of Khunes' tomb). The wall on the east side of the nave has a wide central opening and a smaller doorway at the southern end, and probably separated the nave from the *khurus* (see below). The layout of the sanctuary is unknown. An entrance to the building may be expected in the

northeast, on the account of an important dipinto, that was intended to be visible (see below). Two doorways in the west wall of the church gave access to the monastic buildings on top of the cliff¹⁵.

The central nave used to be roofed by a dome on four squinches. The aisles were covered by barrel-vaults, which were interrupted by hanging vaults in the western corners of the building and probably in the centre of the aisles, on the axes of the openings to the nave. The semi-circular apse in the west wall of the church was headed by a conch.

The church reconstructed by Grossmann as well as this one was not an independent building, for the northern pair of pillars in the former constituted the southern pillars in the latter. Either they are contemporary parts of a single, large church building that included two naves, or one of them is slightly later. The first option may seem unusual, but another example of a church with two naves is

¹⁴ This is also a feature of the church at Qubbat al-Hawâ; cf. Grossmann 1985, 340.

¹⁵ Grossmann's plan of this part of the monastery (1991, 852) shows two opposed staircases: the northern one of which can be equated with the staircase noted above; the southern one is expected in the hall of Khunes' tomb.



Pl. 3. The western corridor to the north of the apse (photograph author, 2005)



Pl. 4. Remains of the northern hanging vault viewed from the east (photograph author, 2005)



Pl. 5. *The later church viewed from the west*
(photograph author, 2005)

the northern church of Dayr al-Shuhadâ' near Esna, dated to the mid-twelfth century¹⁶. At Qubbat al-Hawâ, arguments for a double chapel are the observation that both buildings have masonry with large, roughly dressed blocks, and that the south aisle of the northern church and the north aisle of the southern church seem to be absent. It would also explain the long *khurus* which Grossmann designed for the southern church¹⁷. The second option implies that one of the churches replaced the other. The space in the southern church was limited by secondary mudbrick walls that supported the dome, and by a later chapel in the western aisle, that was entered from the west¹⁸. The northern church, on the other hand, does not seem to have undergone many changes, suggesting that it is more recent. An investigation *in situ* is needed to establish the chronology of the buildings with certainty.

On its own, the northern church is well comparable with the octagon-domed churches of Dayr al-Kûbânîyah and Dayr Anbâ Hadrâ, which are both located in the Aswan region¹⁹. They had one and two square bays, respectively, with a dome on

squinces, supported by a pair of pillars on three sides, and a wall to the east, which separated the nave from the *khurus*. Other common features were the niche in the west wall of the churches, wide central openings on all sides of the central nave, hanging vaults in the aisles on the axes of these openings, and a small doorway in the southern part of the *khurus*-wall. Like these churches, the northern church of Qubbat al-Hawâ probably used to have a *khurus* and a rectangular altar room, which were roofed by a triconch and a small central dome, and two to four side rooms.

Grossmann dated the churches in the region of Aswan to the eleventh/twelfth century, assuming that they were influenced by octagon-domed buildings in eleventh-century Greece, such as the monastic churches of Hosios Lucas in Phocis (Boeotia) and Daphni near Athens²⁰. Epigraphical evidence, however, proves that the church of Dayr Anbâ Hadrâ already existed in the second half of the tenth century, for a commemorative dipinto written on the south wall of the northern aisle is dated A.D. 962²¹. Judging from the graffiti, the northern church of Qubbat al-Hawâ has an *ante quem* date of 1125 (see below).

THE WALL PAINTINGS IN THE NORTHERN CHURCH

The Ascension scene in the western apse

The two-zoned composition in the western apse of the church is painted on white plaster (A on Fig. 1). The upper zone depicts a mandorla with a bust of Christ. The upper part of the mandorla is lost, as is most of Christ's face (Pl. 2). Only his chin, beard, and part of his yellow nimbus are visible. He wears

¹⁶ Grossmann 2002, 555-557, Fig. 169. Grossmann also drew my attention to a double burial chapel in Tall al-Yuhudiyya (Suez) from the early Christian period, with two roughly similar naves; cf. Grossmann 2005, 45-53. This chapel, however, is far removed in time and space from the church at Qubbat al-Hawâ.

¹⁷ I owe these observations to P. Grossmann (personal communication).

¹⁸ Grossmann, 1985, 341-342. Another disturbing feature was the discontinuous ambulatory (Grossmann 1985, 344).

¹⁹ For plans of these monastic churches, see Grossmann 1982, Figs 3 and 18, respectively. See also n. 4 *supra*.

²⁰ Grossmann 1982, 13, 60; *idem* 1985, 344 and 348; *idem* 2002, 90-93, 564.

²¹ Dijkstra/van der Vliet 2003, 31-39, Figs 1, 2. See also Dijkstra 2008, 62.

an orange tunic and a blue pallium, and holds a book in his left hand, while raising the other hand in blessing. The mandorla is carried by six angels who appear to be in flight, the upper ones being partly destroyed. The angels, who have their faces turned to Christ, are dressed identically in white tunics, blue pallia and red-brown or blue shoes, and have red hair and orange wings. They are equipped with yellow nimbi. The lower section is set within a red frame and depicts the Virgin flanked by the twelve apostles. The frontal figure of the Virgin is much damaged, so that one can barely see that she raises both arms up to Christ. She wears a blue *maphorion*, and has a yellow nimbus. The figures of the apostles are damaged as well, in particular their faces. They wear white tunics, alternately red and blue pallia as well as black-and-white shoes, and have yellow nimbi. Two apostles dressed in blue are depicted frontally and hold a book, while the others gaze upward to Christ and raise one or both hands.

The painting displays an Ascension scene, with Christ in a mandorla carried by angels above, and the Virgin and the apostles looking upward below. First represented in Syria-Palestine in the sixth century, the Ascension scene became widely common in Christian art²². In Coptic wall painting it occurs, for example, in Chapel XLVI in the Monastery of

Apollo in Bawit (tenth century?)²³, the Sanctuary of Benjamin in Dayr Abû Maqar (Wadi al-Natrun; eleventh century?)²⁴, the western conch of the Church of the Virgin in Dayr al-Suryan (Wadi al-Natrun; thirteenth century)²⁵, and the Chapel of the Virgin in the north-western corner of the first floor of the Church of St Mercurius in Dayr Abû Sayfayn (Old Cairo; twelfth century)²⁶. The Ascension is also depicted on the al-Mu'allāqa lintel (A.D. 735)²⁷, on painted panels (thirteenth century)²⁸, and in Coptic manuscript illuminations (twelfth-thirteenth centuries)²⁹.

Unusual iconographical details of the Qubbat al-Hawâ painting are the depiction of a bust of Christ, instead of a complete figure, and the presence of six angels. Similar depictions of Christ's bust in a wreath carried by two flying angels are attested on a wooden door panel from the Church of St Barbara (Old Cairo; fourth/fifth century)³⁰ and in a wall painting from the Monastery of Apollo in Bawit (sixth/seventh century)³¹. It should be noted that similar scenes can be found in the domes of more recent ciboria, which display Christ in half-figure (Pantocrator), blessing and holding a book, and being carried by four angels³².

Noteworthy are the apostles' white shoes with black toe-caps and heels. This type of shoe is also depicted in the church of Dayr Anbâ Hadrâ (eastern conch: the priest with the square nimbus; tenth-twelfth century?, see below)³³, and in paintings from Faras in Nubia, representing SS Peter and John (early tenth century), an anonymous archbishop (early tenth century), and the hermit saint Ammonios (before ca 925)³⁴.

The artist's palette was limited to red-brown, red, orange, yellow and blue. The scene makes a schematic impression, for the angels are identical, except for their hair dress, while the apostles wear alternately coloured mantles and assume almost the same posture. The depiction of the figures is characterized by a flat rendering of the faces and hands, but some sense of corporality is suggested by the folds of their mantles, which follow the curves of their limbs. The proportions of the upper part of the figures are clumsy. Consider, for instance, the angels' arms, which are slightly longer than their legs, and Christ's hands: his right hand has unnaturally long and thin fingers, while those of his left hand are short, broad and of equal length, like a fist. A naturalistic detail, however, is the indication of Christ's collar bones.

²² Cf. Leroy 1975, 41; Leroy 1982, 69, 103-104, with further references. For discussions on Coptic apsecompositions, cf. van Moorsel 1991, 55-56; *idem* 2000a, 91-95; *idem* 2000b, 97-105.

²³ Clédat 1999, 87-88, Figs 85-94.

²⁴ Evelyn White 1933, 94, Pl. 25; Leroy 1982, 18, 21. Destroyed after 1920.

²⁵ Leroy 1982, 69 and 103-104, Pl. 125. Removed after a fire in 1991 (Innemie 1998, 143) and presently kept in a monastic building that was specially built for the preservation of removed murals from the church.

²⁶ Leroy 1975, 43, Pls VI a-b; van Loon 1999, 30, n. 133; Zibawi 2004, 166-167, Fig. 220.

²⁷ Coptic Museum inv. no. 753; cf. Gabra 2006, no. 41; van der Vliet 2007.

²⁸ Skalova/Gabra 2006, 198-201, nos 16, 17 (iconostasis beam).

²⁹ For examples, cf. Cramer 1964, Ikonographisches Register, Figs 134, 137; Leroy 1974, Pls C, 68, 95.

³⁰ Gabra 2006, no. 45 (Coptic Museum, inv. no. 738).

³¹ Gabra 2006, no. 39 (Coptic Museum, inv. no. 12089); Zibawi 2004, 81, Figs 91-92.

³² Judy 2004, Pls 4-13, 18-20.

³³ Gabra 2002, 112, Fig. 11.4.

³⁴ Seipel 2002, cat. nos 2, 3, 10.

The upward movement of the angels is suggested by their spread wings, bulging tunics and waving mantles, as with the angels on the above-mentioned door panel and in the Bawit bust. Compared to the Ascension scenes in Dayr al-Suryan and Dayr Abû Sayfayn, the Virgin and the apostles at Qubbât al-Hawâ appear more vivid, as nearly all of them look up to Christ and raise their hands above their heads, although their postures are quite static.

The Ascension scene is located in the west part of the church, as in Dayr al-Suryan³⁵, and more precisely: in an apse in the west wall. It cannot be established whether the painting was part of a cycle, as in Dayr al-Suryan³⁶. The painting has an *ante quem* date of 1125 (see below).

The Patron Saint and Benefactors

The painting to the north of the apse on the west wall of the church depicts the frontal figures of six men on a background of white plaster (B on Fig. 1; Pl. 6). To the left, four monks are dressed in ankle-long, dark brown, white, or red-brown monastic tunics, and have bare feet. The fifth, somewhat shorter figure wears a white garment with an *omophorion*-like collar, which may distinguish him as a priest. Below his waist, the contours of his vestments have disappeared, and there is a large gap at the height of his feet³⁷. All these figures are equipped with square nimbi and raise their hands in prayer³⁸. The sixth figure, a saint to judge by his circular nimbus, is taller than the other figures. He is clothed in a white tunic and pallium, the contours of which are lost from his waist to just above the hem. He holds a book in his left arm.

The interpretation of the square nimbus may vary, depending on whether it occurs in Biblical scenes or portraits. It is often suggested that historical persons depicted with this feature were still alive at the time their images were created³⁹. In the Sinai (seventh century), Thessaloniki (seventh century) and Rome (eighth-twelfth centuries), the square nimbus is generally attested for individuals who financed the decoration of a church or chapel⁴⁰. This also seems to be the case in Egypt, for instance in Chapel LI in Bawit (east wall: a man between two horses, north wall: John, the monk; sixth-eighth century)⁴¹, in the church of Dayr Anbâ Hadrâ (the priest in the eastern conch)⁴², and at Qubbât al-Hawâ. The presence of the saint next to

the presumed sponsors suggests that he represents the patron saint of the church.

The colours used for the painting are dark brown and beige for the contour lines, dark brown and red-brown for the garments, and yellow for the nimbi. The figures are drawn in thick lines, resulting in a flat rendering of the faces and hands, but the monks are given some sense of corporality by the folds in their garments, particularly around their knees. An attempt to approach the features of the represented individuals is suggested by the varying size of the figures and the differentiation of their facial features: two monks seem to be bald, and two monks are bearded. Yet, they all have oblong faces, curved eyebrows, large eyes, small ears, straight noses that end in a point, and slightly curved mouths with indicated lower lips. As Christ in the Ascension scene, the saint's right hand has five short, broad fingers, while all other hands show long, thin fingers. The monks also have long toes with large nails.

The position of the hands of the praying men – in front of the chest – recalls the priest with the square nimbus in the church of Dayr Anbâ Hadrâ, three barely preserved figures of saints in the decorated grotto adjoining the same church (sixth-seventh century)⁴³, and the above-mentioned image of the hermit saint Ammonios from Faras⁴⁴. The latter also has large, staring eyes and the same headdress as two monks and the priest at Dayr Qubbât al-Hawâ (short, with a lock on the forehead), but the artist's palette, which includes black,

³⁵ Leroy 1982, 69.

³⁶ Innemée 1995, 129-132. Two-zoned compositions usually occur in eastern apses; cf. van Moorsel 1991, 55.

³⁷ Since Gabra's photographs (2002, Figs 10.5-6), the cleric's mouth has been destroyed and Arabic graffiti have been carved aside his nimbus. The other figures also deteriorated, due to holes in the plaster.

³⁸ This is one of the latest attestations of the square nimbus in Christian art (suggestion of Zuzana Skalova).

³⁹ Fisher 1995, 93; Gabra 2002, 107, 112; Jastrzębowska 1994, 349; van Loon 2006, 99.

⁴⁰ Jastrzębowska 1994, 349-354, 359, with further references.

⁴¹ Clédât 1999, 111, 113, Photos 102-105, 108; van Loon 2006, 83, 99, Pls 2, 4. The inscription related to the figure of the man between the horses, appears to be a founder's memento for John and his sons.

⁴² Gabra 2002, 112, Fig. 11.4.

⁴³ For a line drawing, see de Morgan 1894, 134 (the second, fourth and eleventh figures from the right).

⁴⁴ Seipel 2002, cat. no. 10.



Pl. 6. Painting on the west wall of the northern corridor (photograph author, 2005)

the double-bordered nimbus, and the rendering of the nose and large ears displays clear differences.

The painting of the row of figures and the Ascension scene are contemporary, judging from their execution on the same layer of plaster, the flat rendering of the faces and hands combined with the suggested plasticity of the limbs, and the identical rendering of Christ's right hand and that of the saint. If the monks and the priest at Dayr Qubbat al-Hawâ are rightly identified as benefactors of the church, it is conceivable that they were the ones who commissioned the execution of the Ascension scene, next to which they are represented.

FOUR DATED INSCRIPTIONS

Although there are numerous interesting Coptic and Arabic inscriptions, this section will focus on four dated inscriptions. They are particularly important for the reconstruction of the history of the church, because they show a clear relation to the architecture, or even the painting.



Pl. 7. Graffito by Abû Jakûb in the apse (a)
(photograph author, 2005)

1. Two identical graffiti by Abû Jakûb

Two graffiti with the same text were carved in the lower part of the western apse: one partly on the tunic of the apostle at the Virgin's right hand (a: 1a on Fig. 1), the other one below the third apostle to her left (b: 1b on Fig. 1; Pls 7-8). Graffito *a* counts five lines of Coptic text, though the beginnings of each line (about one third of the original length) are damaged. The letters are rather irregular incised uncials (measurements unknown): the **κ** extends above lines 1 and 2, the **ο** and **ϣ** in l. 3 are elongated, and the **ϣ** in l. 4 resembles the **ι**. No traces of ruling are visible and the lines tend to slope upward. Graffito *b* is written in three lines of smaller, fairly regular incised uncials (measurements unknown). The letters in l. 1 are slightly cursive (for instance the **η** and the first **π**) and slope a little upward; there are no traces of ruling. The cursive **η** in l. 3 looks like an *h* with a tail⁴⁵. Just one letter of the text is lost. In both graffiti, characteristic letter forms include a three-stroke **μ** with a low saddle, except when the **μ** and **ρ** form a monogram.

Text

Aswan

3 January 1125

a 1 [α]ΝΟΚ b ΑΝΟΚ ΑΠΟΥΑΚΟΠ
α[π]ΟΥΑΚΟΠ ΥΙΥ ΠΕΤ[Ρ]ΟΣ ΤΟΥΒΙ
ΥΙ[Υ] ΠΕΤΡΟΣ ΣΟΥ Η ΠΩΜΑ
ΤΟ[ΥΒ]Ι ΣΟΥ
5 [Η] ΠΩΜΑ

a2./b1. ابو يَكُوب | a3./b2. υἱ(ο)ῦ for υἱός | a4./b2. τωβε; Τῶβι
| a5./b3. (ἀπὸ) μ(α)ρ(τύρων).

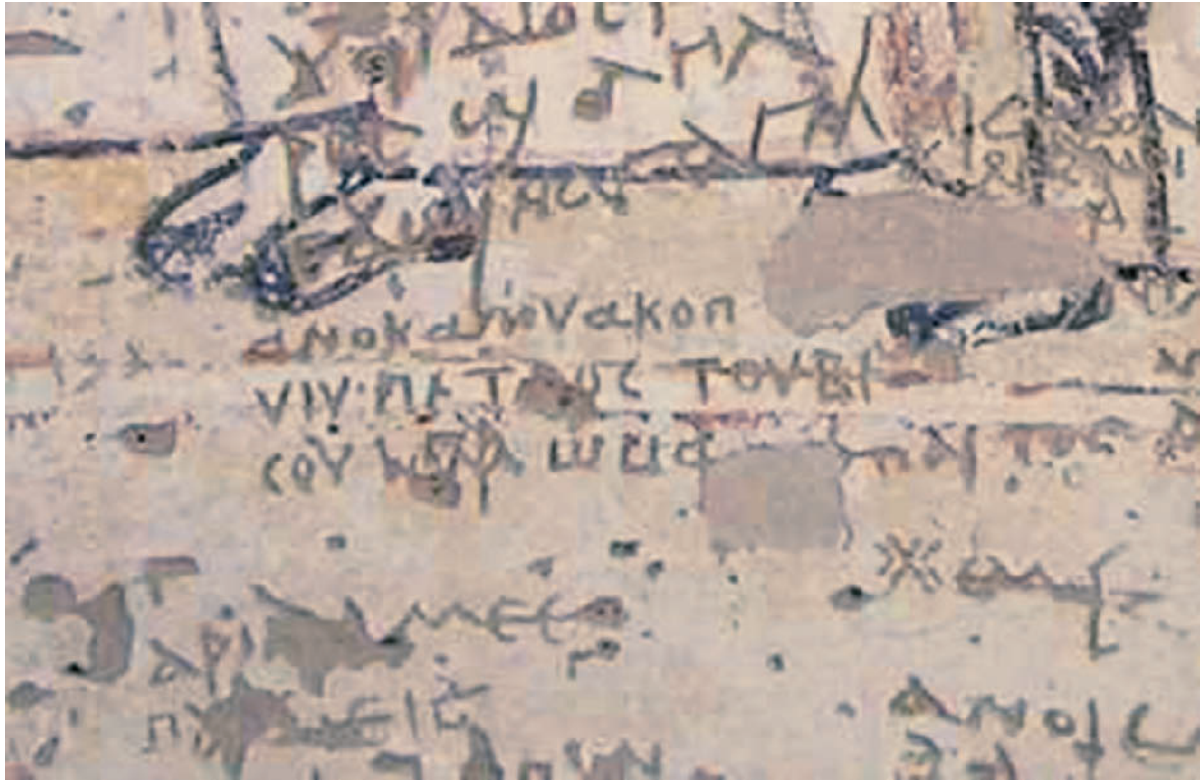
Translation

I, Abû Jakûb, son of Peter, Tòbe, day 8, (year of the)
Martyrs 841.

Commentary

Although visitor's graffiti are very common, the presence of two identical inscriptions in the same place is exceptional. Possibly, Abû Jakûb thought that graffito *b* was not clearly visible among the

⁴⁵ For the *h* as a cursive form of **η**, compare the hand copy of an epitaph in Dayr Anbâ Hadrâ in de Morgan 1894, 140, no. 1 with the transcription in Dijkstra/van der Vliet 2003, 33 (l. 4 (ΧΘΗ; l. 6 ΨΥΧΗ).



Pl. 8. Graffito by Abû Jakûb in the apse (b) (photograph author, 2005)

other, less compactly written inscriptions, and carved graffito *a* in larger uncials.

The text includes several striking features, such as the word **απο(γ)** and the unusual writing of the proper name (usually **ιακωβ**), which are literal renderings of the Arabic 'Abû Jakûb' in Coptic script, the **ο** and **π** representing the 'û' and 'b'⁴⁶. In Christian contexts, **απογ** is variable with **απα** in the synaxarium, documents, and inscriptions⁴⁷. It suggests that the visitor was an Arabic-speaking monk or clergyman, who seems to have been less familiar with Coptic; no parallels for the spelling of his name or the month name were found. The

spelling **γιγ** for 'son of' is attested in late Coptic inscriptions in Esna and Aswan⁴⁸.

On 8 Tôbe 841, that is 3 January 1125, Abû Jakûb carved his graffiti through the Ascension scene in the apse, which implies that the painting and the apse already existed.

2. A dipinto by Laz[aro]s, the superior

Gawdat Gabra published a photograph and brief description of this dipinto⁴⁹. It was written in brown ink on a layer of mud plaster that covered the joint between the southern end of the apse and the lower part of a low, secondary wall (ca 0.5 m high; 2 on Fig. 1; Pl. 9). The mud plaster was applied over the plaster of the painting, just below the feet of the apostle at the far left. Already in 2002, erosion of the mud plaster caused the loss of the rightmost part of the text and revealed the joint between the apse and the secondary wall, which runs through about the middle of the preserved text (measurements unknown). Moreover, several letters in l. 2 are obliterated by holes. Before 2005 the upper part of the first letter of l. 3 was destroyed.

⁴⁶ On Coptic spellings of Arabic phonemes, cf. Richter 2006.

⁴⁷ Crum 1939, 13; Gonis 2001, 47-49. For some examples, cf. *SBKopt.* II, no. 1047 (list; A.D. 828) and no. 1093 (funerary stela; al-Bahnasa; 1150/1159); Coquin 1975, 243-244, no. 7 = *SBKopt.* I, no. 232 (founder's memento; Esna; no date).

⁴⁸ In Esna: *SBKopt.* I, no. 337 (A.D. 1157); *SBKopt.* II, no. 1099 (A.D. 1083); at Dayr Anbâ Hadrâ: Clédât 1915, 45 (A.D. 1404), 48 (A.D. 1297), 51, 56 (no dates); de Morgan 1894, 140, no. 6 (A.M. 1060+).

⁴⁹ Gabra 2002, 107, Fig. 10.7.



Four lines of upright Coptic uncials are visible, but there may have been preceding lines on the secondary wall, which are now lost. The lines are written in a careful hand. No traces of ruling were noted. The first line is fairly straight, but ll. 2-4 tend to slope upward. The **ⲙ** and **ⲣ** form the monogram **ⲙⲣ**. The language is Sahidic Coptic, judging from the definite article **ⲡⲉ** and the verb **ⲛⲁ** (**ⲛⲁⲓ** in Bohairic), but includes the Bohairic form **ⲥⲧ** and many Greek words. The sign *S* indicates the division of the text in units.

Text

Aswan

October/November 1179

1 [] ΤΗΡΝ
[*vac?*]
ΕΓΩ ΛΑΖ[ΑΡΟ]C ΠΕΡΥΚΟ[ΥΜΕΝΟC
Φ† ΝΑ ΝΑϚ [ΑΜ]ΗΝ Δ ΑΘ[ΥΡ ?? ΑΠΟ ΤΟΝ
5 ΑΓΙΟΝ Π ΩϚC CΑΡΑΓ[ΕΝΟΥ ΦΘΕ

3. or: $\lambda\alpha\zeta[\alpha\rho\iota]\bar{\epsilon}$; the ζ is rather a dot placed above the text line; $\acute{\eta}\rho\acute{o}\mu\epsilon\nu\omicron\varsigma$ | 4. $\Lambda\theta\acute{\upsilon}\rho$; or: $\alpha\theta[\gamma\rho\ \varsigma\omicron\gamma\ ??\ \tau\omicron\iota\iota] / \alpha\theta[\gamma\rho\ \varsigma\omicron\gamma\ ??\ \alpha\pi\omicron\ \tau\omicron\iota\iota]$ | 4-5. $[\acute{\alpha}\pi\acute{o}\ \tau\acute{\omega}\nu]$ $\acute{\alpha}\gamma\iota\omega\nu\ \mu(\alpha)\rho(\tau\acute{\upsilon}\rho\omega\nu)$ | 6. $(\acute{\epsilon}\tau\omicron\varsigma)$ $\Sigma\alpha\rho\alpha\chi(\acute{\eta}\nu\omega\nu)$.

Translation

[] us all [].
I, La[zaro]s, the hegoumenos. God, have mercy on
him. Amen.
Hathôr [(year) of the] Holy Martyrs 896,
(year of the) Saracens [575]

Commentary

The nature of the dipinto and the occasion of its writing are not clear, due to incompleteness of the first lines. The text seems to consist of three parts, probably including a prayer for 'us all' (l. 1), a prayer for the *hegoumenos*, or monastic superior, (ll. 3-4), and a date (ll. 4-5).

In l. 1 one may expect a prayer, such as ‘May N.N. bless us all’. The second part begins with **erw**, a name and a title, similar to manuscript colophons throughout Egypt and graffiti in Dayr Anbâ Hadrâ⁵⁰, but without epithets like ‘this poor’.

⁵⁰ Clédat 1915, 45, 53, 55; Coquin 1975; van Lantschoot 1929, nos III (C), IV (E), CVII 1 (A), etc.

The phrase $\overline{\Phi\overline{\tau}}$ $\overline{\text{NA}} \overline{\text{NAQ}} \overline{\text{AMHN}}$ also occurs in Dayr Anbâ Hadrâ⁵¹, as does the sign \overline{S} ⁵².

A reading of $\overline{\lambda\lambda\zeta[\lambda\rho\omicron]C}$ implies that the name was cramped, but other names starting with $\overline{\lambda\lambda}$ and ending in \overline{C} were not very common in medieval Egypt⁵³. The rare spelling of the title $\overline{\zeta\gamma\kappa\omicron[\gamma\mu\epsilon\text{NOC}]}$ may indicate a late date⁵⁴. It is likely but not certain that Lazaros was a superior of the monastery that is presently known as Dayr Qubbat al-Hawâ. Be that as it may, the formal character of the dipinto and its execution on a layer of plaster, which covers the joint between the older apse and a later wall, suggest that Lazaros was involved with the rebuilding or restoration of the church.

The dipinto is dated Hâthûr 896, that is October or November 1179 or First/Last Djumada 575. The elements $\overline{\alpha\pi\theta\tau\omega\text{N}} \overline{\acute{\alpha}\gamma\iota\omega\text{N}} \overline{\mu(\alpha)\rho(\tau\acute{\upsilon}\rho\omega\text{N})}$ and ($\overline{\xi\tau\omicron\varsigma}$) $\overline{\Sigma\alpha\rho\alpha\kappa(\acute{\eta}\gamma\omega\text{N})}$ are common in manuscript colophons from Esna dated ca A.D. 1000⁵⁵.

3. A dipinto by David from Armant

A commemorative dipinto is written in brown ink upon the mud plaster on the north wall of the church, just above a rectangular gap (3 on Fig. 1). Its level (ca 1 meter above floor level?) and the size of its epigraphic field were not measured. In 2005 the state of preservation was fairly good, but compared to that of 2002 (Pl. 10) the ink was less bright, the first letter of l. 3 was lost, and the following one almost destroyed. Already in 2002, there were several holes in the plaster, and a large crack ran through the left part of the text.

The text consists of three lines in Greek followed by seven lines in Sahidic Coptic, written in a prac-

ticed, but slightly irregular hand. Most uncials tend to the right, but some to the left ($\overline{\text{MM}}$ in l. 10). All lines are sloping upward and the writing becomes cramped from line 6 onward. The scribe uses both the shape $\overline{\text{M}}$ and the three-stroke $\overline{\text{M}}$ with a low saddle. In l. 2 the $\overline{\chi}$ in $\overline{\epsilon\lambda\alpha'\chi'}$ is placed above the $\overline{\lambda}$ and the $\overline{\alpha}$, while the word $\overline{\pi\acute{\omicron}\lambda\iota\varsigma}$ is abbreviated. The beginning of the text is unmarked, but // in l. 10 seems to indicate its original end (see below).

Text

Aswan

13 March 1180

1 $\overline{\epsilon\gamma\omega}$ $\overline{\tau\alpha\lambda\alpha\varsigma}$ $\overline{\alpha\mu\alpha\rho}$ $\overline{\tau\omicron\gamma\lambda\omicron\text{N}}$ $\overline{\varsigma\omicron\gamma}$
 $\overline{\lambda\alpha\gamma\epsilon\iota\delta}$ $\overline{\epsilon\lambda\alpha'\chi'}$ $\overline{\overline{\text{D}}}$ $\overline{\rho\mu\omicron\text{N}\theta}$ $\overline{\overline{\text{K}}\varsigma}$ $\overline{\omicron}$ $\overline{\overline{\text{C}}}$
 $\overline{\varsigma\eta\text{N}\chi\omega\rho[\iota\varsigma]\omicron\text{N}}$ $\overline{\tau\omicron\gamma}$ $\overline{\text{PAPA}} \overline{\tau\omega\text{MA}}$ $\overline{\alpha'\mu\eta\text{N}}$
 $\overline{[\alpha\iota\text{M}]\omicron\gamma\zeta}$ $\overline{\epsilon\pi\zeta\alpha\gamma\iota\alpha\varsigma\mu\omicron\varsigma}$ $\overline{\text{NTEIEKK}\overline{\text{L}}\chi\varsigma\iota\alpha}$
5 $\overline{[\overline{\text{N}}\overline{\text{B}}\overline{\text{P}}]\rho\epsilon}$ $\overline{\text{NTAQCMNTC}}$ $\overline{\text{N}\overline{\text{B}}\iota}$ $\overline{\text{PENETW}}$
 $\overline{\epsilon\text{NE}}$
 $\overline{[\text{PI}]\varsigma\kappa}$, $\overline{\kappa\upsilon\text{PPEI}}$ $\overline{\alpha\text{BBA}}$ $\overline{\varsigma\epsilon\eta\text{N}\rho\omicron\varsigma}$ $\overline{\alpha\gamma\zeta\alpha\gamma\iota\alpha\zeta\epsilon}$
 $\overline{\mu\mu\omicron\varsigma}$ $\overline{\text{MN}}$ $\overline{\text{TKOLYMBH}[\theta] \rho\alpha}$ $\overline{\zeta\text{M}}$ $\overline{\rho\omicron\omicron\gamma}$
 $\overline{\text{N}\overline{\zeta}\overline{\rho}\overline{\omicron}\overline{\omicron}\overline{\gamma}}$
 $\overline{\text{PAPM}\zeta\alpha\tau}$ $\overline{\iota\zeta}$ $\overline{\text{MAP}}$ $\overline{\omega\overline{\text{Q}}\varsigma}$ $\overline{\alpha\gamma\zeta\alpha\gamma\iota\alpha\zeta\epsilon}$ $\overline{\epsilon\chi\text{M}}$
 $\overline{\text{PRAN}}$ $\overline{\text{NPPATP}} \overline{\text{IAPHXHC}}$ $\overline{\varsigma\epsilon\eta\text{N}\rho\omicron\varsigma}$ $\overline{\text{P}\overline{\text{O}}\varsigma}$
 $\overline{\mu\omicron\gamma\zeta}$
10 $\overline{\mu\mu\omicron\iota}$ $\overline{\text{NNEQCMOY}}$ $\overline{\epsilon\tau\omicron\gamma\alpha\alpha\text{B}}$ $\overline{\alpha\mu\eta\text{N}}$ //
 $\overline{\varsigma\alpha\rho}$ $\overline{\overline{\Phi\overline{\tau}}\overline{\epsilon}}$

1. $\overline{\tau\acute{\alpha}\lambda\alpha\varsigma}$; $\overline{\acute{\alpha}\mu\alpha\rho(\tau\omega\lambda\acute{\omicron}\varsigma)}$; read here the nominative $\overline{\delta\omicron\omicron\lambda\omicron\varsigma}$ $\overline{\varsigma\omicron\upsilon}$ | 2. the $\overline{\text{I}}$ has one dot that is carried by the $\overline{\epsilon}$; $\overline{\epsilon\lambda\acute{\alpha}\chi(\iota\varsigma\tau\omicron\varsigma)}$; $\overline{\pi\acute{\omicron}\lambda(\epsilon\omega\varsigma)}$, $\overline{\epsilon\rho\mu\acute{\omega}\nu\theta\iota\varsigma}$; $\overline{\kappa(\acute{\upsilon}\rho\iota\omicron)\varsigma}$ $\overline{\acute{\omicron}}$ $\overline{\theta(\epsilon\acute{\omicron})\varsigma}$ | 3. there is no room for $\overline{\varsigma\eta\text{N}\chi\omega\rho[\text{HC}]\omicron\text{N}}$; read $\overline{\varsigma\eta\gamma\chi\acute{\omega}\rho\eta\varsigma\omicron\text{N}}$ $\overline{\tau\acute{\alpha}}$ $\overline{\text{PAPA}} \overline{\tau\omega\text{MA}}$ ($\overline{\tau\alpha}$ $\overline{\mu\omicron\upsilon}$) | 4. $\overline{\epsilon\kappa\kappa\lambda\eta\varsigma\iota\alpha}$ | 5-6. $\overline{\epsilon\pi\iota\varsigma\kappa(\omicron\text{P}\omicron\varsigma)}$ | 6. read $\overline{\kappa\acute{\upsilon}\rho\iota\omicron\varsigma}$; $\overline{\acute{\alpha}\gamma\iota\acute{\alpha}\zeta\epsilon\iota\text{N}}$ | 8. the $\overline{\text{M}}$ in $\overline{\text{PAPM}\zeta\alpha\tau}$ is narrow and does not seem to have a saddle, due to the above-mentioned crack; ($\overline{\acute{\alpha}\pi\theta}$) $\overline{\mu\alpha\rho(\tau\acute{\upsilon}\rho\omega\text{N})}$; $\overline{\acute{\alpha}\gamma\iota\acute{\alpha}\zeta\epsilon\iota\text{N}}$ | 9. read $\overline{\text{P}\overline{\text{B}}(\omicron\iota)\varsigma}$ | 10. ($\overline{\xi\tau\omicron\varsigma}$ / $\overline{\acute{\alpha}\pi\theta}$) $\overline{\Sigma\alpha\rho(\alpha\kappa\acute{\eta}\gamma\omega\text{N})}$.

Translation

I, miserable one (and) sinner, your slave, the humble David of the city of Armant. Lord God, pardon (my) mistakes. Amen.

I have paid for the consecration of this new church, which our father and bishop, Lord Abba Severus has established. He consecrated it and the baptismal tank on this very day, Paremhat, (day) 17, (year of the) Martyrs 896. He consecrated (it) in the name of the Patriarch Severus. Lord, repay me with his holy blessings. Amen. (Year of the) Saracens 575.

Commentary

This dipinto is a dedicatory text, a type of text that is occasionally attested in Egypt⁵⁶. The text consists

⁵¹ Clédat 1915, 45-46, 48-49.

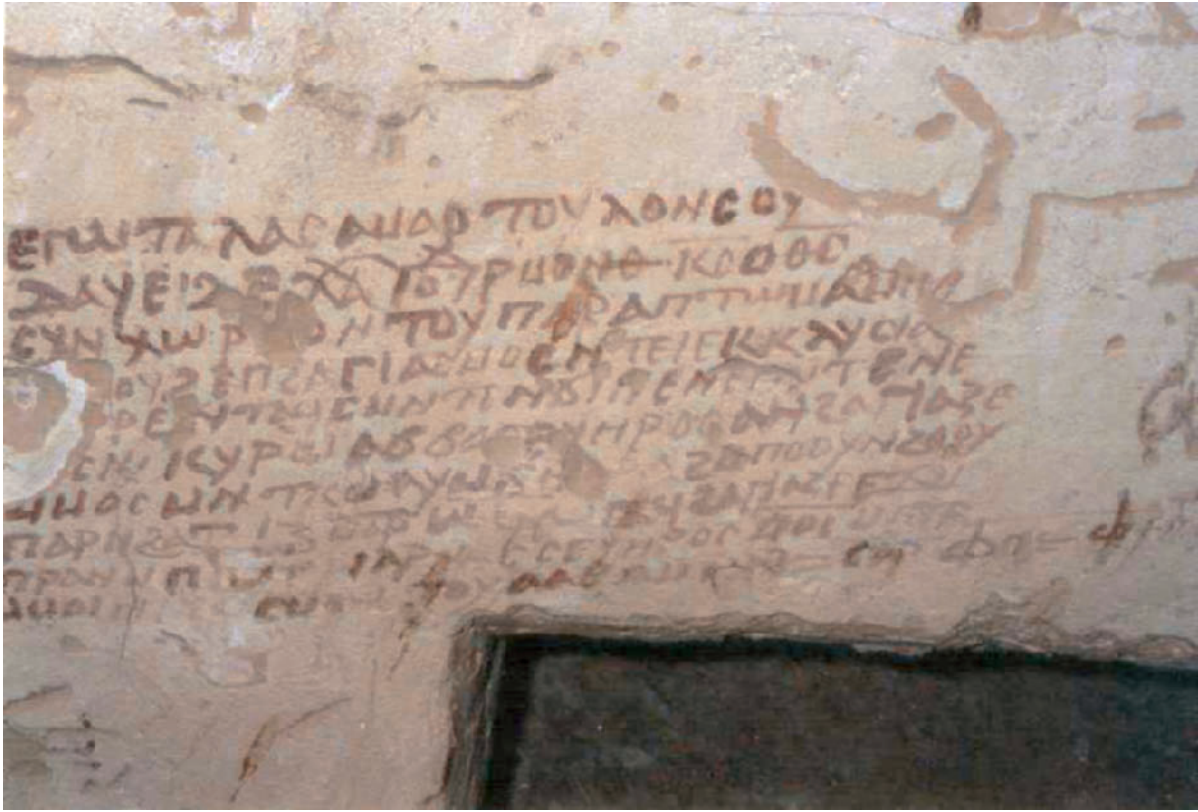
⁵² Clédat 1915, 50, 56.

⁵³ *SBKopt.* I, 317, 'Indices: Personennamen'; Hasitzka 2004, 54-55. 'Lazaros' is attested in particular in seventh/eighth-century documents. For a late example, cf. Clédat 1915, 45 (A.D. 1404).

⁵⁴ Förster 2002, 323; see also Clédat 1915, 45 (A.D. 1404).

⁵⁵ Van Lantschoot 1929, 114-115, in particular nos CXI, l.22-23 and CXVII, 2-4 (various spellings).

⁵⁶ For some examples, cf. Coquin 1975, 246-261, Inscr. G = *SBKopt.* I, no. 328 (Esna, no date); Crum 1904, 554-555 (Dayr Anbâ Shinûdah; ca A.D. 1300?); Jeudy/van der Vliet 2006, 73-80 (Fayum; A.D. 920/921); Lefebvre 1910, 59-60 (Abû Hâmîd; A.D. 959); Mallon 1906, 107-111 (Philae; A.D. 723).



Pl. 10. Dedicatory inscription of the later church (photograph J.H.F. Dijkstra, 2002)

of a Greek and a Coptic part, and is therefore comparable with Coptic manuscript colophons that include copyist's mementos written in Greek⁵⁷.

The Greek part (ll. 1-3) introduces the sponsor of the church, David from Armant, whose identity is not further specified, and is full of abbreviated formulaic expressions, some of which occur in southern Egypt and Nubia in particular. The expression (εγω) **ΤΑΛΑΣ ΑΜΑΡΤΩΛΟΥ** is found in three colophons of Coptic manuscripts from Esna, which date to ca A.D. 1000⁵⁸. The accusative **ΤΟΥΛΟΝ ΣΟΥ** derives from funerary formulae, such as ἀνάπαυσον τὸν δοῦλόν σου N.N., but is applied as a 'frozen' epithet, regardless of its grammatical status in the present context⁵⁹. The full formula is attested on the Greek epitaph of a Nubian monastic superior (eight-tenth century), together with a close parallel of the phrase συγχώρησον τὰ παραπτώματα μου⁶⁰. The abbreviation **ⲓⲁ** is common in Coptic inscriptions in Esna and Dayr Anbâ Antûniûs⁶¹. The invocation **ⲕⲥ ⲟ ⲛⲥ** occurs as **ⲕⲉ ⲟ ⲛⲥ** in a Greek-Arabic graffito in the southern church at Qubbât al-Hawâ⁶².

The Coptic part (ll. 4-10) commemorates the consecration of 'this new church' and a baptismal font by Bishop Severus, presumably of Aswan, and its dedication to Patriarch Severus of Antioch⁶³. It relates to the first part by the statement of the sponsor's involvement in the consecration and a prayer on his behalf in l. 10. The closest parallel of this prayer seems to be: **ⲉⲣⲉ ⲡⲉⲣⲥⲙⲟⲩ ⲉⲩⲟⲩⲁⲃ ⲛⲁⲱⲱⲡⲉ ⲛⲙⲙⲁⲛ ⲧⲏⲣ̅ⲛ**, 'May His blessing befall us all'⁶⁴.

⁵⁷ For instance van Lantschoot 1929, nos III (C), IV (E), XXXIII (B), CVIII (E), CXVI (B).

⁵⁸ Van Lantschoot 1929, nos CIX, l. 4, CXVII a, l. 1-2, CXVIII 1, l. 3.

⁵⁹ For another example, see *I.Khartoum Copt.*, nos 23, l. 6-7, and the commentary on p. 81-82 as well as n. 370.

⁶⁰ *I.Khartoum Greek*, no. 29, l. 4-5 and 10-11 (provenance unknown).

⁶¹ Coquin 1975, 249 and 257. For examples, see Inscr. G, l. 7 and 9, Inscr. I a, l. 4 and Inscr. P, l. 3 and 5.

⁶² Grossmann 1985, 340, n. 7, l. 3.

⁶³ Nabih Kamel and Atef Naguib (2003, 174) call the monastery 'Dayr Anbâ Sâwîrus'.

⁶⁴ Van Lantschoot 1929, nos II, l. 10-12 and XIX, l. 4 (both from the Fayum; ninth c.).

Bishop Severus is not attested elsewhere⁶⁵. His civil title, *κύριος*, suggests that he originated from the social elite. If he was bishop of Aswan, he may have been the immediate successor of Theodorus, bishop of that town on 22 Tōbe 889 (17 January 1173), according to a Coptic inscription of that date⁶⁶.

Patriarch Severus of Antioch (512-518), an opponent of the Council of Chalcedon (451), is revered as the greatest theologian of the one-nature Christology and has enjoyed great popularity in Egypt, where he died in 538. His cult became widespread in Egypt⁶⁷.

The dipinto dates to the very day of the consecration on 17 Paremhat 896 A.M., that is 13 March 1180 A.D. or 14 Shawwal 575 A.H. The method of dating (month, day, A.M., A.H.) is conform to the formula in Coptic manuscript colophons⁶⁸. The isolated location of the Islamic date suggests that it was forgotten and then added after the sign marking the end of the text.

The writer of the dipinto, whether David of Armant himself or someone else on his behalf, was familiar with abbreviated Greek formulae used in manuscript colophons in Upper Egypt or in Greek Christian epithaphs in Nubia. The deviating spellings of *δοῦλος* and *ἐκκλησία* may reflect common patterns of vowel interchange⁶⁹.

Considering the significance of this text for the memory of the mentioned sponsor and the bishop, it was probably executed close to the entrance of the church, in order to be visible. In that case, the entrance must have been located in the east part of the north wall.

These inscriptions tell the following about the history of the church:

1. The Ascension scene in the western apse already existed on 3 January 1125, when Abû Jakûb, presumably a monk or clergy man from the southern part of Egypt, carved his graffiti twice into the layer of the painting in the apse.

2. In October/November 1179, the superior Laz[aro]s of a monastery, the name of which is not mentioned, wrote his dipinto partly on a secondary wall and partly on the southern side of the apse.
3. On 13 March 1180, Bishop Severus, presumably of Aswan, consecrated 'this new church' and its baptismal font, built with financial support of David of Armant. The church was dedicated to Patriarch Severus of Antioch.

CONCLUSION: RECONSTRUCTION OF THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

Concerning the history of the church, the following conclusions can be drawn on the basis of the examination of the architectural, art historical and epigraphical material:

- Grossmann's plan of the church at Qubbat al-Hawâ supplemented with the constructions uncovered in 1998 results in a plan of two adjoining octagon-domed churches, each lacking a side-aisle. Either they were part of a double church, which would be quite unusual, or the northern building is more recent. Their relation needs to be established by means of an investigation *in situ*. The northern building included an apse in the west wall.
- The northern church was built well before 3 January 1125, for the Ascension scene in the apse already existed when a visitor carved his graffiti through the layer of paint. For technical as well as stylistic reasons, the painting of the patron saint and the sponsors on the west wall to the north of the apse can be considered contemporary.
- Apparently, the northern church went through some adaptations or reconstructions between 1125 and 1179/1180. The secondary wall at the south side of the apse dates to this period. The dipinto dated October/November suggests that Laz[aro]s, a monastic superior (of the present Dayr Qubbat al-Hawâ?), was involved in the building activities in the church, which had by then come to an end.
- On 13 March 1180 'this new church' was consecrated by Bishop Severus (of Aswan?) and dedicated to Patriarch Severus of Antioch. The location of the dedicatory text on the north wall of the northern church suggests that the event at least concerned the northern building. The

⁶⁵ He is not mentioned in the bishops' lists of Fedalto 1988, II, 654-655, Munier 1943 or Timm 1984, I, 225-226.

⁶⁶ Timm 1984, I, 225-226. For the inscription, see *SBKopt.* I, no. 1060; Edel 2008 (QH 34f).

⁶⁷ Allen/Hayward 2004, 3-30; Papaconstantinou 2001, 188-190.

⁶⁸ Van Lantschoot 1929, nos LXXXIV, I, 36-39 (Upper Egypt; A.D. 983), CXIII 1, I, 24-25 (Esna, A.D. 992).

⁶⁹ Cf. Gignac 1976, 264 (γ>υ).

baptismal font, which has not been identified, was also consecrated.

- Dayr Qubbat al-Hawâ is sometimes considered a dependency of Dayr Anbâ Hadrâ⁷⁰. This assumption can only be confirmed by textual sources that demonstrate a relation between the monasteries on an organisational level. If Dayr Qubbat al-Hawâ indeed depended on Dayr Anbâ Hadrâ, one would expect the monks of the latter monastery to be main sponsors of the former. Instead, the consecration of the church was paid by David of Armant, whose relation to Dayr Qubbat al-Hawâ (other than as a sponsor) remains unclear.

This preliminary survey was aimed at recording the architecture, the paintings and four dated Coptic texts and providing a first integrative study of these sources. Yet, a more profound archaeological/architectural investigation is required to correct the provisional plan and to establish the building history of the church. Moreover, an epigraphical campaign is necessary, in order to record the remaining Coptic and Arabic inscriptions before they will have become illegible.

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⁷⁰ Grossmann 1991, 851; *idem* 2002, 92, 257, n. 242, 276-277; cf. Gabra 2002, 105-106.

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From Naqada to Esna A Late Coptic Inscription at Deir Mari Girgis (Naqada)¹

Renate DEKKER and Jacques VAN DER VLIET

On February 6, 2008, just before the start of the international symposium 'Christianity and monasticism in Upper Egypt: The region from Nag Hammadi to Esna' at Naqada, the present authors had the opportunity to visit some of the monasteries between Naqada and Qamula². Deir Mari Girgis, the Monastery of St George, in particular attracted our attention because of the previously unknown Coptic inscription that we publish here. The history of Deir Mari Girgis, which is also known as Deir al-Majma' (the Monastery of the Synod), dates back well before the twelfth century, as the remains of one of its four churches suggest. The Church of Saint John is one of the two medieval structures that remain in this area, the other one being the main church of Deir Mari Buqtur (the Monastery of St Victor)³. The present Church of St George at Deir Mari Girgis is a modern building, however, and replaces the original church, which was levelled in the 1920s⁴. The inscription is found on an isolated stone slab, standing against the inner west wall of this church, to the left of the entrance. Its exact provenance is unknown, but it may have been discovered during undocumented excavations that were carried out on the site by the Antiquities Service in the later part of the twentieth century.

A. DEIR MARI GIRGIS

The text is inscribed on a slab of hard sandstone, its greatest measurements being 51 × 75 × 11.5 cm. (Pl. 1). The upper part of the stone seems complete, but the lower end is broken away. On the left-hand side, the epigraphic field is marked off from a broad blank margin by a deeply engraved vertical line; on the right-hand side, no such margin is found, but a protruding tenon suggests that this side of the stone was set into a wall. The back side is only very roughly dressed.

Ten lines of continuous text survive. About three lines must have preceded the present text, but these

have entirely disappeared except for some vague traces. Surface wear and candle grease affect the legibility of the remainder of the inscription.

The text is written in extremely inelegant incised uncials of a medieval type, showing an angular U-like *mu*; the lower end of the *rho* has an upward stroke to the right. Numerals are irregularly marked off by high points. The script of our l. 1 is considerably smaller than the following lines, and this line may have been inscribed by a different hand. The height of the letters is ca 1.5-2 cm. in l. 1, and 4.5-5 cm. in l. 10.

The language is Sahidic Coptic with some irregularities.

Deir Mari Girgis (Naqada) A.D. 1316-1317

[about three lines precede]

ⲫⲛ ⲧⲉⲣⲟⲙⲡⲉ ⲛⲓⲱⲟⲣⲡ ⲉⲡⲓⲱⲟ ⲁⲃ

ⲁⲓⲃⲱⲕ ⲛⲓⲃⲓ ⲁⲙⲁⲃⲣⲁⲧ

ⲫⲙ ⲡⲉⲗⲟⲟⲩ ⲙⲡⲥⲁⲃⲃⲁⲧⲟⲛ

4. ⲕ · ⲫⲛ ⲙⲉⲥⲣⲁ ⲁⲓⲱ ⲫⲛⲓ

ⲫⲙ ⲡⲟⲟⲗ · ⲓ · ⲁⲓⲱ ⲫⲛ

ⲧⲙⲉⲗⲥⲛⲧⲉ ⲛⲣⲟⲙⲡⲉ

ⲉⲡⲁ / · ⲁⲓⲱ ⲁⲓⲃⲱⲕ <ⲛⲓⲃⲓ> · ⲁⲙⲁⲃ-

8. ⲣⲁⲧ ⲫⲙ ⲡⲉⲗⲟⲟⲩ ⲛⲧⲕⲣⲓⲁⲕⲛ

ⲕⲓ ⲙⲛ ⲉⲡⲛⲡ ⲁⲓⲱ

¹ We thank His Grace Bishop Bimen, Bishop of Naqada and Qus, and his staff, in particular Sister Salwa, as well as the sisters at Deir Mari Girgis, for their assistance and hospitality.

² See Clarke 1912, 121-140; Grossmann 2004; Johann Georg 1914, 56-58; *idem* 1930, 47-48; Samuel al Syriani/Badii Habib 1990, 50-57, nos 54-61; Timm 1984-1992, IV, 1727-1732.

³ For the Church of St John, see Grossmann 2004, 26, Fig. 2, Pls III-IV (the dome shown there has now collapsed); cf. Clarke 1912, 137-139, Pls XXXIX-XL; Grossmann 1982, 22-25, Fig. 8; *idem* 1991, 820-821.

⁴ See Grossmann 1991, 820; cf. Samuel al Syriani/Badii Habib 1990, 53-54, no. 58; Grossmann 2004, 26-27.



Pl. 1. Stone inscription at Deir Mari Girgis (Naqada; photograph Renate Dekker 2008)

ⲕⲙ] ⲡⲟⲟⲗ ⲛ̅ ⲛⲁⲥ ⲕⲛ ⲧⲁⲓⲣⲟⲙ-
[ⲡⲉ ⲛⲟϥⲱⲧ]

9. ⲙ̅ⲛ̅, l. ⲕⲛ.

10. ⲧⲁⲓ-: l. ⲧⲉⲓ-.

...] in the first year, in 1032.

(A)l-Mabrat went on Saturday (ⲥⲁββⲁⲧⲟⲛ) 20 of Mesra (Mesore), and of the moon (day) 10, and in the second year, in 1033.

(A)l-Mabrat went on Sunday (ⲕⲟⲣⲓⲁⲕⲏ) 23 of Epêp, and of the moon (day) 7, in this [same] year [...

The inscription commemorates the ‘going’ (ⲃⲱⲕ) of a man called al-Mabrat on various precisely recorded dates. Two successive years are mentioned, A.M. 1032 and 1033, which correspond to A.D. 1315/16 and 1316/17 respectively. Line 1, mentioning the year A.M. 1032, shows a smaller script and possibly a different hand. Presumably, therefore, the remainder of the surviving text (ll. 2-10) was written one year later (in A.M. 1033). Mesore

20 (13 August) is a Saturday in A.D. 1317, and 23 Epêp (17 July) a Sunday in that very same year. Since the latter date is the earlier one, this must have been added as an afterthought, which is confirmed by the presence of the demonstrative ⲧⲁⲓ- in l. 10, presumably meaning ‘this (very same) year’, i.e. A.M. 1033.

The entries for all three dates, as far as they are preserved, show an identical structure: weekday, day of the month, moon-day, year A.M. The years A.M. are, moreover, designated as the first and the second year respectively (in ll. 1 and 6). The way in which these dates are constructed shows a clear lack of familiarity with the traditional scribal habits of Sahidic. In particular, the odd preposition ⲙ̅ⲛ̅ in l. 9 (instead of ⲕⲛ in the parallel phrase in l. 4) may have been chosen under the influence of the Arabic *min*⁵. The month name Mesore is also written in its Arabic form, Mesra, in l. 4. The habit of dating by moon-days, which is attested in late Greek and Coptic inscriptions from Nubia and the First Cataract-area⁶, undoubtedly reflects a similar influ-

ence. The demonstrative **ται-** in l. 10 must be a Bohairicism. On the whole, the text bears witness to a very late stage of Sahidic, in which it was apparently not in use for writing purposes anymore.

The main questions raised by the inscription are, who al-Mabrat was and why the trouble was taken to commemorate his ‘going’ on at least three different days in two successive years in a stone inscription. The stone itself clearly does not answer these questions. The Arabic name Mabrat and its variants occur in some other Coptic texts⁷, but in only one instance possibly the same person was intended. This is another inscription from the same general region, a dipinto from the Church of Deir al-Fakhuri, near Esna, which we republish below, with some minor modifications, after René-Georges Coquin’s excellent first edition of the text.

B. DEIR AL-FAKHURI

Dipinto on the western face of the south-eastern pier of the central domed room of the monastery church, at about eye level (Pl. 2). Remains of eight lines of text painted on plaster in black ink. The lower part of the text, beyond l. 9, is broken away. L. 1 must have consisted of monograms only; Coquin’s l. 2 is non-existent, as is shown by the decorative use of raised letters in l. 3, which is actually the first line of the text proper. We nevertheless retained his line numbering to avoid confusion.

The text appears to be written by a single practiced hand in a clear late uncial. Both a decorative four-stroke *mu* (in l. 3 only) and a three-stroke U-like *mu* (remainder of the text) are used. A staurogram appears to precede the text of l. 3 (not read by Coquin). A long line separates ll. 6 and 7. The date in the beginning of l. 7 is written in much bigger script, occupying also the beginning of l. 8.

The inscription is bilingual, in Greek and Sahidic Coptic. In order to bring out the use of different codes, we render those parts of the text that were apparently meant to be Greek in minuscles.

Bibl.: Coquin 1975, 277-279, inscr. P, Pl. XLIX; *SBKopt* I, no. 348 (M.R.M. Hasitzka); cf. Leroy 1975, Pl. 67.

Deir al-Fakhuri (Esna)

A.D. 1316

[$\overline{\Gamma C}$ *] $\overline{\chi}[c]$

vac.

↓ Δούλου ἐλαχ(ίστου) κ(αὶ) εὐτελοῦ **ΜΕΡΚΟΨΡΙ**
ΖΩΚ-

4. **ΡΑΦΟΣ** $\overline{\Upsilon\Upsilon}$ **ΠΑΙΑΚΟΝ** **ΑΝΑΤΟΛΕ** [**ΜΟΝ**] **ΑΧ-**
ΡΟΣ $\overline{\Upsilon\Upsilon}$ **ΠΜΟΥΝΑΣΤΗΡΙΟΝ** **ΜΠΝΙΩΤ**
[Π]ΡΟΦ΄Τ΄
[Α]ΠΑ **ΩΕΝΟΥΤΕ** **ΠΝΟΥΤΕ** **ΝΑ** **ΝΑϚ** Ἀμήν
κ(αὶ) (ἀμήν).

Χ΄Ρ΄Μ΄Ρ΄ $\overline{\Delta\Lambda\beta}$ **ΑΠΑ** **ΛΜΑΒΡΑΤ** **ΧΟΚ** [**ΕΒ**] **ΟΛ** [
8. **ΜΠΕΒΟΤ** **ΜΟCΡΗ** **C** [
] **ΑΠΑ** **ΛΜΑΒΡΑΤ** **ΧΟ** [**Κ**
ΕΒΟΛ

1. Coquin [**IC** **ΠΕ**] **Χ**[**C**].

3. ↓: uncertain, Coquin om.; **ΔΟΨΛΟΨ** **ΕΛΑΧ΄Κ**;
εὐτελοῦ: l. εὐτελοῦ, Hasitzka **ΕΥΤΗΛΟΥΨ΄**; **ΟΨ**
(ter): ligature.

3-4. **ΖΩΚ**|**ΡΑΦΟΣ**: Coquin **ΖΩΓ**|**ΡΑΦΟΣ**.

5. **[Π]ΡΟΦ΄Τ΄**: no room for **[ΜΠ]** or **[ΠΕΠ]**.

6. in fine: **κ**/ $\overline{\varphi}$ [**Θ**].

7. **Χ΄Ρ΄Μ΄Ρ΄**: two monograms; **ΧΟΚ**: Coquin **ΧΩΚ**.

8. first part occupied by date in l. 7; **ΜΠΕΒΟΤ**: Coquin
ΜΠΒΟΤ; **C**[: Coquin om., fortasse **C**[**ΟΥ**].

9.] **ΑΠΑ**: Coquin **Α**] **ΠΑ**; **ΧΟ**[**Κ**: Coquin **Χ**].

[*Greek*] [Jesus +] Christ.

+ (Memento of the) most humble and insignificant servant [*Coptic*] Merkouri, painter (ζωγράφος), son (υἱός) (of) the deacon (διάκων) Anatole, monk (μοναχός) (and) son (υἱός) (of) the monastery (μοναστήριον) of our father, (the) prophet (προφήτης) Apa Shenoute. O God, have mercy on him. [*Greek*] Amen and Amen.

[*Coptic*] Anno Martyrum (χρόνων μαρτύρων) 1032.

Apa (a)l-Mabrat finished [

] in the month Mosrê (Mesore), [day?

] Apa (a)l-Mabrat finished (?) [

⁵ As was suggested to us by DR. Samuel Moawad.

⁶ Nubia: Bagnall/Worp 1986; cf. Bagnall/Worp 2004, 313-314; Qubbat al-Hawa (Aswan): *SBKopt.* II, no. 1060; Edel 2008, 514-517 (QH 34f). Earlier Coptic examples of dating by the moon appear to belong to the domain of magic and divination; e.g. P.Cairo 45060 (ed. Kropp 1930-1931, I, 50-54).

⁷ The name occurs as **ΜΟΥΒΡΑΤ** and **ΜΕΦΡΑΤ** in various unpublished eleventh-century documents from Naqloun, including the account book British Library Or. 13885; as **ΑΛΜΩΒΡΑΤ** in a letter from Ashmunayn: Crum 1905, no. 1155, ro., ll. 2-3. Cf. Heuser 1929, 116.



Pl. 2. *Dipinto in the Church of Deir al-Fakhuri (Esna; photograph Renate Dekker, 2008)*

Coquin treated the very fragmentary text reproduced above as one inscription (labelled P by him). This is, indeed, what the style of writing and the general appearance of the text seem to suggest. Yet, the long line, separating ll. 6 and 7, and the large date that opens l. 7 clearly divide the text into two parts, even though it is likely that these were written at the same time and by the same hand.

The upper part of the dipinto (our ll. 3-6) is a bilingual, Greek-Coptic, prayer for a painter Merkouri⁸. He was the son of a deacon Anatole and a monk of the Monastery of St Shenoute, the

famous White Monastery near Sohag. Coquin convincingly argued that he is none other than the painter Merkouri who left more or less similar dipinti in the Monastery of Anba Hadra near Aswan in A.M. 1034 (A.D. 1317-1318), in the Red Monastery near Sohag on 11 Mesore 1017 A.M. (4 August 1301 A.D.) as well as in A.M. 1038 (A.D. 1321-1322), and in the church of the White Monastery itself (undated)⁹. His professional qualities as a painter and a number of similarities with the inscriptions left by Merkouri elsewhere, in particular in the Red Monastery, suggest that he wrote all of these dipinti himself.

The exclusively Coptic lower part of the text (ll. 6-9), by contrast, twice mentions a certain Apa (a)l-Mabrat as well as a date in Mesore A.M. 1032, that is between 25 July and 23 August 1316. At first sight, the use of the verb $\chi\omega\kappa \epsilon\beta\omicron\lambda$ in l. 1 could suggest that this inscription is commemorative in

⁸ For a similar late bilingual dipinto, see Dekker 2008, 19-36, no. 3 (Aswan); in general, for the learned interest in Greek in this period and region, see Sidarus 2000.

⁹ See Coquin 1975, 277-278, where all references are given; the Red Monastery dipinti of A.M. 1038 are as yet unpublished.

character. The verb is occasionally used in the sense of 'to reach perfection' as a euphemism for 'to die'¹⁰. Both the name (a)l-Mabrat and the verb apparently reoccur in l. 9, however, which is less likely to happen in a funerary inscription. Instead, the identical spelling of the name and the similar way of repeating statements about the same person recall the contemporary inscription from Naqada. It seems highly plausible that both inscriptions mention the same person, who left Naqada on at least three dates in 1316 and 1317, and who 'finished' or 'completed' something in Esna on various occasions in 1316.

Regrettably, although the Esna inscription does provide some additional information about al-Mabrat, the text is very incomplete and, therefore, not as helpful as one might hope. In Esna, al-Mabrat receives the honorific title Apa, which suggests that he could have been a monk, but this is by no means certain¹¹. The close way in which he is associated with the painter Merkouri, however, may prove to be more significant. It is conceivable that he was an itinerant artist, like Merkouri, and 'completed' some painting or restoration work initiated by the other or undertaken in conjunction by both men. In that case, the Naqada inscription might record the occasions on which he was called away from home to work elsewhere. Yet, precisely this inscription suggests that he may have been a personality of more consequence than a mere artist. In the fourteenth century, the Naqada region appears to have been less of a backwater than it might seem. Thus, some fifty years later, in 1372, Bishop Timotheos of Faras and Ibrim in Nubia was enthroned in the nearby Monastery of St Victor (Deir Mari Buqtur), in the presence of none other than the well-known scholar and bishop Athanasius of Qus¹². Whatever role Apa al-Mabrat may have played in Naqada and Esna in the early years of the century is likely to remain unknown, unless additional sources add new pieces to the puzzle.

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¹⁰ For its background, see van der Vliet 1988.

¹¹ See Derda/Wipszycka 1994; Gonis 2001.

¹² See Plumley 1975; cf. Brakmann 2006, 327-328; Coquin 1977, in particular 145-146; Sidarus 2000, 293-294; Timm 1984-1992, II, 723-726.

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Paradise Lost, Paradise Regained: The Meaning of Adam and Eve in the Baptistry of Dura-Europos

Lucinda DIRVEN

It is a truism that the beliefs and practices of the beholder are crucial to the interpretation of religious imagery. Historical images never speak for themselves, but only convey meaning when studied in their architectural and ideological contexts. The interpretation of the paintings from the baptistry of Dura-Europos proposed by Carl Kraeling in his Final Report of the building, presents a fine example of this premise¹. The ruins of the ancient city of Dura-Europos are situated on the south bank of the Euphrates in present-day Syria². Shortly before this Hellenistic foundation was conquered by the Sasanians in A.D. 256, possibly in about A.D. 230, a house located on the street just behind the city walls was converted into a meeting place for Christians (Fig. 1). One of its rooms was embellished with a cycle of scenes illustrating events from the Jewish scriptures and the Gospels³. The presence of a font against its west wall suggests that the decorated room was used to initiate new members into the religious community (Pl. 1)⁴. Kraeling proposes that shortly after the completion of the painting program, a rudimentary painting of Adam and Eve was added below the original decoration of the Good Shepherd with his sheep, in the apse above the font (Pl. 2; Fig. 2). Its position above the font, the focus of the worshipper's attention, makes this a highly meaningful scene for the entire decoration. Kraeling argues that the scene was added in order

including those of the Good Shepherd and Adam and Eve, are in the storerooms of the Gallery. I did not see these paintings when I visited the gallery in 1992. I was told by Dr Susan Matheson, then the curator of Ancient Art, that they are in a bad state of preservation. After they were discovered, the paintings were treated with a consolidant that turned out to be very damaging to the painted surface.

² On Dura-Europos in general and the history of the excavations, see Dirven 1999; Hopkins 1979; Perkins 1973; Rostovtzeff 1934; Sommer 2005. On the different cults in the city and their possible interaction, see Dirven 2004.

³ About 40% of the original decoration of the room survived. In addition to the painting of the Good Shepherd and Adam and Eve on the east wall that are discussed in this article, the following representations remain. The north wall is divided in two registers. In the upper register are painted two events from the Gospels: the healing of the paralytic and Christ and Peter walking on the Lake of Galilee. In the lower register, on a far bigger scale, are the lower part of a door and three fragmentary figures of women carrying torches, walking towards a structure with a pediment roof that is represented at the western end of the wall, next to the font. This scene has been interpreted as the women visiting Christ's grave on Easter morning, or as the five wise virgins from the parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins. The latter interpretation is inspired by the painting on the west wall, in which only five pairs of women's feet remain. They are thought to belong to the foolish virgins from the parable. On the south wall are paintings of David slaying the giant Goliath, and a woman at a well. She is either identified as the Samaritan woman from the Gospels, or as Rebecca from the Old Testament book Genesis. The painting that occupied the western end of the upper register of this wall was almost entirely lost. Apparently, it was a garden scene that was tentatively identified by Kraeling as a depiction of Paradise. For the purpose of the present article, it is not necessary to discuss these scenes in detail. They are described and discussed extensively by Kraeling in his Final Report. Although I do not agree with Kraeling in every respect, it is important for the present purpose that all representations could satisfactorily be explained by him with reference to Syriac baptismal ritual practice. An important recent study of the scene of David and Goliath is Koral/Stanke 2009.

⁴ At first, there was much discussion about the function of this room. Several scholars argued the room was used for baptism, whereas others argued that it was a martyrium. Cf. the outline of the discussion in Wessel 1966, cols 1226-1228. Kraeling 1967, 145-151, settled the question in favour of a baptistry, and to my knowledge the interpretation as a martyrium is no longer advocated.

¹ Kraeling 1967, with references to previous publications. An important recent publication is Wharton 1995, esp. 51-60. The building was found and excavated by the Yale Dura Expedition in 1931-1932 and first published in the Preliminary Report of the fifth season of work published in 1934 by C. Hopkins, P.V.C. Baur and A.D. Nock (in Rostovtzeff 1934, 238-288). The paintings were removed from the walls and transported to New Haven, where the baptistry was reconstructed in the Yale University Art Museum. However, this reconstruction was dismantled in the 1970s. At present, only the panels representing the female figures from the north and east walls are on display. The remaining paintings,

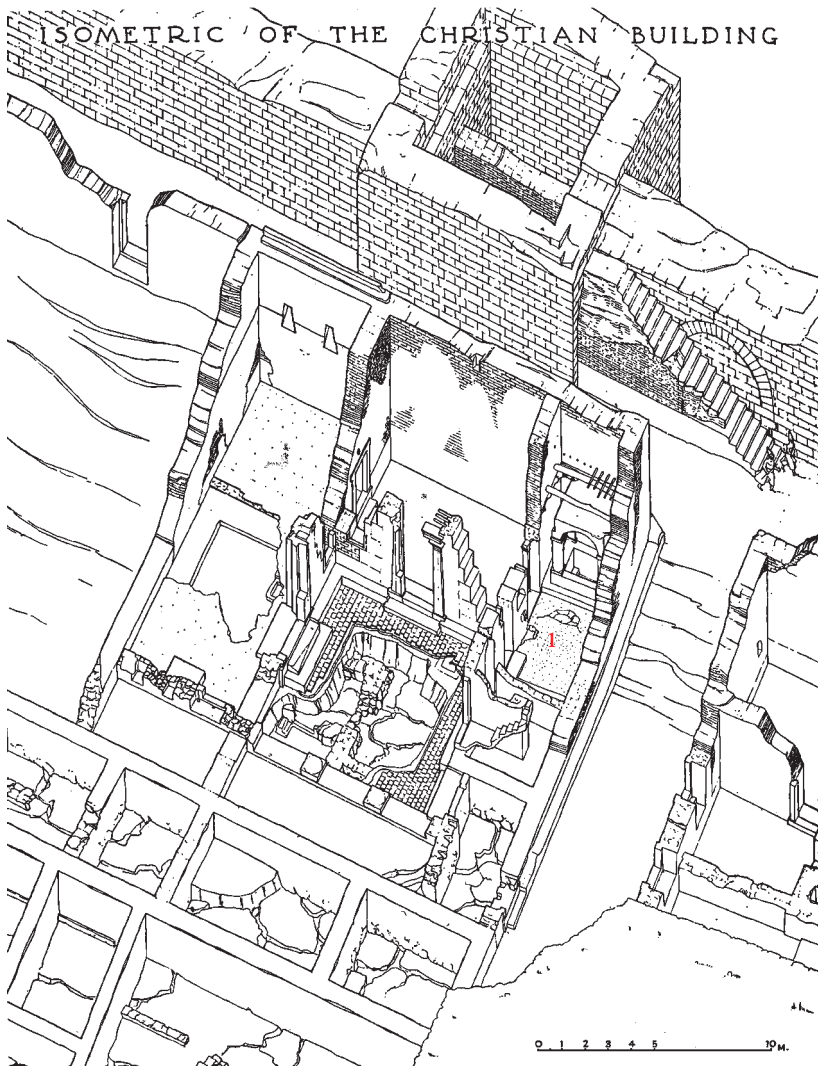


Fig. 1. Isometric construction of the Christian building by Henry Pearson. Room no. 1, located at the back of the building, functioned as baptistery (after Kraeling 1967, Pl. III)



Pl. 1. Former reconstruction of the west wall in the Yale University Art Museum (Courtesy YUAG)



Pl. 2. Field photograph of the Good Shepherd and his flock, with Adam and Eve in the lower left-hand corner (Courtesy YUAG)

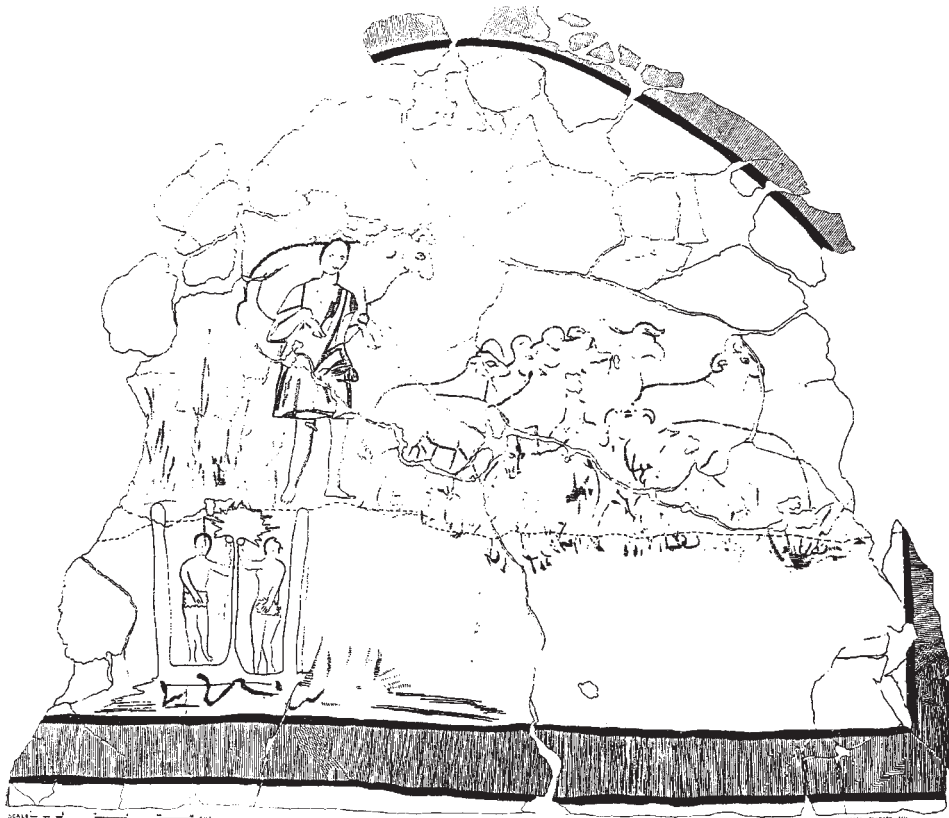


Fig. 2. Tracing by Henry Pearson of the Good Shepherd and his flock, with Adam and Eve in the lower left-hand corner, after Kraeling 1967, Pl. XXXI)

to change the original meaning of the programme. Whereas the decoration is thought originally to have illustrated eastern Christian notions on baptism and salvation, the scene of Adam and Eve supposedly incorporates the theological ideas of the apostle Paul, as expressed in his epistle to the Romans (Rom. 5-6). According to Paul, the sin of Adam had to be destroyed by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Through baptism, the initiate dies and is resurrected with Christ. By pointing to the importance of Adam's sin as a factor of outstanding importance in baptism, the Christian community of Dura supposedly conformed to the interpretation of baptism that was current in the churches of the Mediterranean world. As Kraeling rightly notes, this redirection in the theology of the Durene Christians implies that the meaning of the entire decoration and each scene changed accordingly⁵.

Given the huge implications that the presumed addition of Adam and Eve has for the meaning of the decorative program of the baptistery, one would expect reviewers to have commented extensively on Kraeling's hypothesis. Surprisingly, however, his interpretation of the scene is taken for granted by most reviewers⁶. Several commentators have, however, expressed doubts about Kraeling's eastern Syrian reading of the original programme. They argue that not only Adam and Eve, but the entire decoration should be seen in the light of western Syrian theology and art⁷. Kraeling's western interpretation of the scene of Adam and Eve is advanced as a major argument in favour of the presumed Mediterranean origin of the decoration of the Dura baptistery. In addition, the western meaning of the

cycle is frequently substantiated by reference to the supposed western origin of both the Christian community and the paintings.

The present article aims to show that the picture of Adam and Eve does not necessarily refer to a Pauline notion of baptism. Kraeling and subsequent scholars failed to notice that it is equally possible to interpret the primordial couple in the light of baptism as practised in early eastern Syrian Christianity. In Syriac-speaking Christianity, the fall of Adam is not associated with the notion of original sin. Instead, the fall of the primordial couple is understood through the idea of the 'garments of skins'. Humanity is thought to have inherited this perishable set of garments through Adam and Eve. It is through baptism that these garments are changed into 'garments of light' and Paradise is regained. Read along these lines, Adam and Eve are in perfect accord with Kraeling's original interpretation of the program. Furthermore, Adam and Eve as personification of 'Paradise lost' can be interpreted as a prologue to the scene of the Good Shepherd above. Whereas Adam and Eve are placed in the earthly Paradise, the Good Shepherd alludes to the eschatological Paradise, which is partially recovered through baptism.

In establishing what the Christian community of Dura believed, the decoration is obviously not the right starting point⁸. The baptistery illustrates events from the Jewish scriptures and the gospels, and these books were used by a variety of Christian groups around the middle of the third century in Syria. Furthermore, the scriptural canon was not yet defined at this time. For this reason, the first part of this article discusses the circumstantial evidence for the nature of Christianity in Dura. Unfortunately, however, evidence on this matter is extremely meagre. For this reason, advocates for the influence of a western, Christianity in Dura have pointed to the western origin of both the community and the paintings. It will be argued that proof in this respect is both indecisive and unfitted to reconstructing the theological views of the Christian community in Dura-Europos. Our only piece of evidence regarding the beliefs of the community is provided by the fragment from a gospel harmony that was found in the proximity of the baptistery. Although this scrap of evidence does not provide firm proof of the beliefs that were current among the Christians of Dura, I aim to show that it does corroborate the Syrian interpretation of the decoration. In the final

⁵ Kraeling 1967, 202.

⁶ Downey 1970, 138-141 (who does express doubts about the presumed conflict between representatives of great Mediterranean sees and Syrian and Mesopotamian Christians); Flemming 1971, 290-292; Snyder 1968, 329-332; Wessel 1973, 154-157. Only Dassmann 1973, 375, explicitly rejects Kraeling's interpretation. He denies the influence of Paul at this early date and instead opts to interpret the scene as a symbol of the remission of sins.

⁷ Lassus 1969, 136 rightly notes that Kraeling does not explain why the representation of Adam and Eve should be understood from a completely different perspective. In fact, Syriac sources are completely disregarded in the interpretation of this scene. A western (Syrian) origin of the whole cycle is advocated by Brenk 2003, 67; Grabar 1969, 20; Guillaumont 1971, 291-293; Hopkins 1979, 111-112.

⁸ Contra Kraeling 1967, 116.

part of this article, the meaning of Adam and Eve in the ritual of Syrian baptism will be examined.

DESCRIPTION

Before turning to a re-evaluation of the meaning of Adam and Eve, it will be useful to describe the picture and its location in the baptistery in some detail. The figures of Adam and Eve are painted in the lower left-hand corner, below the figure of the Shepherd and his flock, at the back of the *aedicula* that surmounts the baptismal font, against the west wall (Pl. 2; Fig. 2)⁹. The entire scene of Adam and Eve is only 0.35 m wide and 0.28 m high¹⁰. Hence its figures are very small, especially compared to those in the scene of the Good Shepherd above. The scene is framed by two trees¹¹. In the centre stands a smaller tree. Under this tree, two figures are standing. Both are nude, apart from the aprons of leaves that they hold in front of their private parts. Their inner arms reach out to two round fruits that hang from the tree in the centre. On Henry Pearson's drawing, the figure to the left of the tree has a slight rounding of the outline of the breast, suggesting that this is a female. In the foreground, below the ground line used as emplacement for the trees, is a snake. It is moving towards the left, with its head and fore part held up from the ground.

Above Adam and Eve, in the lunette above the font, is a representation of the Good Shepherd and his sheep¹². The scene is 1.40 m wide and 1.08 m high, and thus far bigger than the small figures of Adam and Eve below. Slightly to the left of the centre stands a shepherd who is about 0.40 m high. He is represented standing three-quarter front, as if moving towards the right. On his shoulders is a huge ram. He wears the *chiton*, the conventional dress of the *criophoros*. The shepherd is beardless. To the right-hand side, a large flock of rams is grazing. Kraeling estimates that the group consists of at least thirteen animals. All are represented in profile, facing towards the right.

Both scenes are illustrations of biblical passages. The scene of the shepherd and his flock is generally identified as illustrating the allegory of the Good Shepherd and his sheep, described in John 10:11-16. Its location above the font, which is the place where other religions at Dura represent the main deity of their sanctuary, suggests that it functions as a generic symbol for the main protagonist of Chris-

tianity. Initially, the excavators had problems identifying the small scene at the bottom, but they soon realized that the two figurines were Adam and Eve¹³. The scene depicts two successive events described in Gen. 3:1-7: the picking of the fruit from the forbidden tree and Adam and Eve's subsequent realization, when they have become aware of their nudity and cover their shame.

In addition to their literal meaning, both scenes are undoubtedly related to the ritual that took place right in front of them: baptism. According to Kraeling, Syrian and related sources show that the Good Shepherd refers to the new relationship of the convert with the Lord¹⁴. Through baptism, he argues, the convert is accepted as a member of Christ's flock, i.e. the Church¹⁵. The scene of Adam and Eve, however, is interpreted by Kraeling as a supplement, that introduces the Pauline doctrine of atonement¹⁶. Consequently, the meaning of the Good Shepherd and the other scenes changes accordingly. The shepherd no longer symbolises the Church, but Christ who saves the neophyte through his own death¹⁷.

A crucial element of the hypothesis that Adam and Eve were a correction to the program is the

⁹ Baur in Rostovtzeff 1934, 257, suggests that a whole series of similarly small pictures may have carried on across the lower border of this Good Shepherd scene. The painter perhaps had the intention of depicting the expulsion from Paradise, but never finished this part. Unfortunately, Baur's suggestion can no longer be verified.

¹⁰ Kraeling 1967, 55-57, Pls XVII, XXIII-XXIV, XXX-XXXII; Rostovtzeff 1934, 256-259 (Baur).

¹¹ According to Baur in Rostovtzeff 1934, 258, they are flanking pilasters that indicate the walls of the earthly paradise. However, the foliage in the scene of the Good Shepherd clearly indicates they are meant to be trees.

¹² Kraeling 1967, 50-55, Pls XXX-XXXII.

¹³ This may be inferred from Hopkins' letter to James Rowland Angel, president of Yale, right after the finding of the chapel: 'Deigert and I dug out the sanctuary and there was the Good Shepherd and the sheep plain enough, with a second scene in the lower left corner ... with two people in white loin cloths picking fruit and a great serpent in front' (Kraeling 1967, 229).

¹⁴ Kraeling 1967, 180-183. Kraeling elaborates upon the interpretation first proposed by Quasten 1939, 220-244 and *idem* 1947, 1-18.

¹⁵ Kraeling 1967, 180-182. Cf. also Lassus 1969, 136.

¹⁶ Kraeling 1967, 201-202. The interpretation with reference to Romans 5:19 and I Corinthians 15:22 is already made in the preliminary report by Baur in Rostovtzeff 1934, 259.

¹⁷ This is the interpretation advanced by Baur in Rostovtzeff 1934, 283; cf. Kraeling 1967, 202.

assumption that the sketch was added later¹⁸. This Kraeling infers from its asymmetrical position below the main scene and from the fact that it does not fit in the area; the branches of the flanking trees reach up into the scene of the Good Shepherd¹⁹. Lastly, Kraeling points out that the background colour continues unbroken under the elements of the composition, instead of around it, as with the other paintings from the baptistery²⁰. Since the couples are painted in the same style as the other paintings, Kraeling assumes that they were supplemented not long after the program was completed.

The idea that the artist was called back to add another scene to the cycle he had just completed is of course possible, but not very probable. Furthermore, even if we assume with Kraeling that the sketch of Adam and Eve was made after the surface below the Good Shepherd had been painted, it does not necessarily follow that the scene should be read as a correction to the original program²¹. It is equally possible to suppose that it was an addition meant precisely to highlight the program's original meaning²².

Kraeling substantiates his hypothesis that the scene was a correction to the original program by referring to competing and conflicting forms of Christian belief current in northern Mesopotamia at the time. He refers to a certain Palut, who was

sent to Edessa by Bishop Serapion of Antioch in order to spread the theological doctrines of Paul that were taught at the metropolis²³. Apart from the scene of Adam and Eve, however, there is absolutely no indication that this theological debate reached Dura. Other scholars have therefore argued that it is more reasonable to suppose that the entire decoration illustrates western notions of baptism²⁴. They substantiate their claim by reference to the western origin of the Durene community and the western style of the paintings. It is to these two issues that we now turn.

CHRISTIANITY IN DURA-EUROPOS

The nature of Christianity at Dura is crucial to a proper understanding of the paintings. Unfortunately, however, data from Dura is extremely limited. In the absence of better evidence, the origins of the Christian community and the style and iconography of the paintings have been taken as major clues in reconstructing the beliefs of the Durene Christians. The origins of the community in Dura remain hazy. Christianity spread from Antioch to the remainder of Syria, reaching Edessa some time in the second century. The central question in the debate has been whether Christianity arrived in Dura directly from Antioch, or by way of Edessa. This interest is in turn inspired by the supposition that certain regions can be connected to particular schools of thought. Coele Syria, with its centre Antioch, is generally assumed to be related to the teachings of the apostle Paul and a strongly Hellenised Christianity, whereas the region around Edessa is associated with an eastern, Syrian Christianity²⁵. In what follows, I aim to show that this distinction is extremely dubious²⁶.

Information about the size and origin of the Christian community is mainly provided by the history of the building and the scant graffiti that was found here. The so-called 'house-church' was originally constructed as a domestic building, but around 230 it was converted into an edifice that was used exclusively by the Christian congregation²⁷. There is no proof that Christians used the building before 230. Nor is there evidence for the presence of Christians elsewhere in Dura before this date. But of course, this does not imply that there were none. It may be inferred from the size of the assembly hall that the congregation numbered about 60 to 75 members around the middle of the third

¹⁸ Kraeling 1967, 168-169 and 200-203, following Rostovtzeff 1938, 133. According to Kraeling, the paintings were made by the same artist. He stresses that the style of both paintings is the same. In contrast, Hopkins 1979, 110 argues that the styles are distinct. Adam and Eve are oriental, whereas the Good Shepherd is western in style. This is the position of the Preliminary Report: Rostovtzeff 1934, 241.

¹⁹ I do not find this argument convincing. First, it is not clear that the overlapping traces are indeed branches of the trees. Second, there are other scenes from the baptistery that do not fit either, such as the painting of David and Goliath, in which David's head and hand overlap with the frame (Kraeling 1967, Pl. XLI).

²⁰ Arguments to this effect are listed in Kraeling 1967, 51 and 56-57.

²¹ Already noted by Lassus 1969, 139.

²² Wharton 1995, 51 with n. 128, refers to the representation of Adam and Eve as a marginal footnote.

²³ Kraeling 1967, 117 and 202. Kraeling's account is based upon the *Doctrina Addai*; cf. Burkitt 1994.

²⁴ See n. 7.

²⁵ For example, Kraeling 1967, 114-115.

²⁶ For a rough sketch of Syrian Christianities at the time and references for further reading, see Drijvers 1992, 124-146.

²⁷ Kraeling 1967, 34-39.

century. Initiation into the cult must have been important, for the room in which new members were baptised was the only room in the building adorned with paintings.

Where these Christians came from, and who felt attracted to the new faith, is not well known. Personal names from graffiti found in the building, the style and iconography of the painting, and the origin of the gospel harmony or Diatessaron, of which a tiny fragment was found in the proximity of the baptistery, have been advanced as major arguments for the hypothesis that they came from the west of Syria.

The graffiti found in the building includes only four personal names, all written in Greek. Four names is, of course, extremely little to go on, especially if we assume that the community comprised at least 60 members. Two of the names, Paulos and Proklos, are Greek, and are also attested among the soldiers who served in the Roman army stationed at Dura from 165 onwards²⁸. The third, Heras, is also a common Greek name²⁹, whereas the fourth, Siseos, is a local name³⁰. George Kilpatrick concluded from these names that the Christian community of Dura was thoroughly Greek³¹. This seems to be pushing the evidence too far; not only is one of the names local, but an Aramaic graffito associated with the image of a mounted archer, and a graffito of a Syriac alphabet were also found in the chapel³².

Since two of the names concur with those of soldiers stationed in Dura, Jean Lassus argued that Christianity came to Dura with the Roman army, and reached the city by way of Antioch³³. But of course it does not follow from the fact that some of the members served in the army that soldiers introduced the cult. Furthermore, even if we suppose that Christianity came to Dura with the army, its exact origin remains problematic, since the recruitment of soldiers and their personnel was diverse. As Nigel Pollard has shown, members of one of the main regiments stationed in the city, the *Cohors XX Palmyrenorum*, predominantly came from the surroundings of Palmyra and Dura Europos. Personal names from other units, however, suggest a high level of recruitment of individuals of Greco-Macedonian extraction and Hellenized Syrians³⁴.

Although the four names are of hardly any use in determining the origin of Christians of Dura, it is perhaps telling that none of them is Jewish. Hence the names suggest that the Christians in Dura were

not recruited from the Jewish community. This is substantiated by the synagogue that was recovered not far from the building used by the Christians. Its decoration and construction history show that the Jewish community of Dura was thriving around the middle of the third century³⁵. There is nothing to suggest that they were losing people to the Christians³⁶. The gentile background of most Durene Christians is perhaps confirmed by the five *abecadaria* that were found in the Christian building³⁷. These alphabets were traditionally used in astrology and were supposed to be efficacious in producing good luck and averting evil. They are common in pagan temples and private houses in Dura, so their popularity in the Christian building shows that the Christians shared many of the same beliefs as the other inhabitants of the city³⁸.

In sum, we may conclude that the Christians in Dura were probably people of a gentile background, who were at least partly recruited from men who served as soldiers in the Roman army. Possibly, these soldiers introduced Christianity in Dura, but this is

²⁸ Kraeling 1967, 92, no. 9 and 96, no. 18.

²⁹ Kraeling 1967, 95, no. 16 (scratched to the right of the head of the first woman pictured on the north wall of the baptistery).

³⁰ Kraeling 1967, 95, no. 17 (on the south wall, between the doorways). Cf. Perler 1972.

³¹ Kilpatrick 1964, 220-222. It might be sheer coincidence, but the fact that one out of the total of three Syriac inscriptions from Dura was found in the Christian house church is noteworthy. One of the *abecadaria* from the Christian building referred to below, n. 37, is in Syriac: Kraeling 1967, 91, no. 3. Cf. Kilpatrick 1964, 217, for the number of inscriptions in Greek, Latin, Palmyrene Syriac and Aramaic in Dura dated to the Roman period.

³² Kraeling 1967, 91, no. 3 and 92-93, no. 12, Fig. f. In view of the mounted archer, it is tempting to associate the graffito with a member of the *Cohors XX Palmyrenorum*, an auxiliary unit of the army. However, the graffito is on the undercoat of plaster and may predate the conversion of the house into a Christian meeting place.

³³ Lassus 1969, 139.

³⁴ Pollard 1996, 216-217; *idem* 2000, 128.

³⁵ Kraeling 1956.

³⁶ Dirven 2004.

³⁷ Kraeling 1967, 89-90, who lists the instances from other buildings. No alphabet was found in the synagogue, but representations of the evil eye show that the Jews too shared certain popular religious practices with their pagan environment.

³⁸ Downey 1970, 140. Of course, they only prove that the Christians shared a local culture, not that they were originally pagans who introduced their old practices into a new belief.

bound to remain hypothetical. To infer from their Greek personal names that the Christianity they adhered to came from Antioch, would definitely be pushing the evidence too far.

A second argument cited in favour of the western character of Christianity at Dura is the western style and iconography of the baptistery paintings. Their presumed resemblances to a westernised Syrian style or to western models are hard to substantiate, since contemporary paintings from these regions are virtually absent. Hence it has been argued that the style of the paintings of the baptistery is far more Hellenistic than contemporary paintings that were found elsewhere in Dura, notably those from the synagogue and the mithraeum. Both the synagogue and the mithraeum display Parthian or Iranian influences, that are thought to be entirely absent in the Christian paintings³⁹.

This supposed western origin of the decoration is highly problematical for several reasons. First, the paintings do not adhere to one style, but are readily divisible into two distinct modes of representation. The frontal and majestic figures of the procession of the lower register of the north and east walls form one group⁴⁰. They contrast sharply with the sketchily painted figures of the Good Shepherd and his sheep in the lunette above the font, and the narrative scenes in the upper registers of the north and south walls. The origin of both styles is a hotly contested matter. According to Kraeling, for example, the procession of women in the lower registers testifies to oriental traditions, whereas for Hopkins the same figures belong to the westernized Near

East⁴¹. In my view, it is best to follow Annabel Wharton, who concludes that there was no such thing as one local style. Instead, different styles co-existed and were used to convey different meanings⁴². This is confirmed by other paintings from Dura, in which different style elements co-exist⁴³.

Second, the bad state of preservation of the paintings at the time that they were found, and the low quality of the photographs and drawings that have been published, hardly allow a balanced qualification of their style. It is generally accepted that the painter from the baptistery was less talented than the artists who decorated the synagogue and the mithraeum⁴⁴. However, the drawings by Henry Pearson by no means do justice to the paintings, making them look like the handiwork of a child. In turn, this has led to an exaggeration of the differences from other contemporary paintings in Dura. Although they are not the work of a highly skilled artist, the field photograph of the Good Shepherd, reproduced here (Pl. 2), shows that the quality was far better than both the drawings and the photographs published in the Final Report suggest. On the excavation photograph, the Good Shepherd and his flock are not altogether very different from several figures in the synagogue. The rams, in particular, are very similar in style to the animal figures painted on the ceiling tiles of the synagogue, and closely resemble the deer in the mithraeum's painting of Mithras the hunter⁴⁵. Both the intrados of the Torah shrine and the canopy of the font were embellished with the imitation of fruit garlands that are very similar in execution, design and style to those in the paintings from the baptistery⁴⁶. As far as one can tell from the evidence, therefore, it is best to conclude with Kraeling that the paintings are the work of a local painter⁴⁷.

It has sometimes been argued that the subject matter and iconography derive from western models, since they are reminiscent of the paintings from the Christian catacombs in Rome⁴⁸. Although three of the scenes represented in Dura are also among the earliest and most frequently represented in Rome, a direct relationship is extremely unlikely⁴⁹. As was already shown by Kraeling, the iconography of virtually all scenes from Dura differs from representations of the same subject in Rome⁵⁰. In fact, the representation of Adam and Eve is the one that most closely resembles western representations, since the pictures from Dura and Rome both represent the primordial couple standing on either side

³⁹ Hopkins 1979, 117; Rostovtzeff 1938, 133.

⁴⁰ Hopkins 1979, 117; Lassus 1944, 14; Rostovtzeff 1938, 133.

⁴¹ Hopkins 1979, 117.

⁴² Wharton 1995, 52.

⁴³ The paintings from the synagogue provide the most clear examples.

⁴⁴ Lassus 1942, 14.

⁴⁵ Kraeling 1956, Pl. X (synagogue); Rostovtzeff 1938, Pl. XVIII.1 (mithraeum, hunting scene).

⁴⁶ Kraeling 1956, Pls XV.2-3 (synagogue); *idem* 1967, 45 with Pl. XLIV (no proper picture was published in the Final Report).

⁴⁷ Kraeling 1967, 169-176.

⁴⁸ Brenk 2003, 67-69; Guillaumont 1971, 292.

⁴⁹ The Good Shepherd, the Healing of the Paralytic, and the Woman at the Well. Cf. Kraeling 1967, 207, n. 5.

⁵⁰ Kraeling 1967, 208-215. Cf. also Grabar 1969, 21-22.

of the tree, plucking the fruit from the tree and covering their nakedness⁵¹. Apart from these similarities, however, there are considerable differences. The representation of Adam and Eve from Dura is highly unusual in that the scene is framed by two trees. The depiction of the snake on the ground rather than curled around the tree is also rare in western representations. Another local peculiarity is the tree of knowledge. It is not pictured as a deciduous tree, as in the west, but as a palm tree⁵².

Recently, David Parker, David Taylor, and Mark Goodacre launched a third argument in favour of the supposed western Syrian character of Christianity in Dura: the origin of the Diatessaron fragment⁵³. This tiny papyrus fragment was found in the embankment, two blocks north of the Chapel, on the other side of the Great Gate. It is the only existent evidence for the scriptures used by the Christian community, and, as such, of major importance in reconstructing their beliefs and practices⁵⁴. Until Taylor, Parker and Goodacre published their article, it was generally assumed without much discussion that it was a fragment of the gospel harmony that was originally composed by Tatian in Syriac before 172 and shortly afterwards translated into Greek. The harmony combines the four gospels into one text, eliminating internal omissions and contradictions⁵⁵. Parker, Taylor and Goodacre have argued that the fragment is not part of Tatian's Diatessaron, but belongs to an anonymous gospel harmony that was originally composed in Greek, probably around the latter part of the second century in western Syria. As such, they claim that the Diatessaron fragment provides sparse, but essential information about the theological identity of the Christian community at Dura⁵⁶.

In reply to Parker, Taylor and Goodacre, Jan Joosten recently defended the Tatianic nature of the Dura fragment. Joosten's arguments also have a bearing upon the presumed western origin of the text, since he showed that it is impossible to tell from the text whether it represents an original Greek composition or a translation from Syriac⁵⁷. Even if it is assumed that the text was originally composed in Greek, this does not necessarily imply that it originated in the West of Syria. Han Drijvers has convincingly argued that the region around Edessa was thoroughly bilingual⁵⁸. In fact, the whole argument of Parker *et al.* for a western origin rests on the use of the word *σταυρωτέντα*, which

is only attested in the Dura Diatessaron fragment and in the Gospel of Peter, that may also have been of western Syrian origin⁵⁹. Since this is slight proof, the three scholars corroborate their hypothesis of a western origin by means of the Greek personal names in the graffiti and the style of the paintings from the Dura baptistery⁶⁰. However, as I hope to have shown above, neither of these provides sufficient proof in favour of a direct relationship between Christianity in Dura and Antioch and the surrounding area.

Even if one could demonstrate that Christianity in Dura originated in, or was influenced by, Antioch, this does not sufficiently prove the influence of Paul, let alone of his teaching of redemption. For a long time, it was broadly acknowledged that Antioch was the home of a Pauline form of Christianity that eventually became embodied in the figure of Bishop Ignatius. More recent studies, however, emphasize that Christianity in Antioch was far more diverse. Our view is distorted by the extant sources, that are written from the perspective of the winning party, the form of Christianity that was adopted as

⁵¹ On the various types of representations of Adam and Eve in the Roman catacombs, see Calcagnini 2000, 96-101 and Robin 2000, with references for further reading. For the comparison of the scene from Dura with Roman representations, Kraeling 1967, 214-216; Korol 1987, 65 and 70-72.

⁵² Robin 2000, 27.

⁵³ The most important edition of the text, which consists of 15 lines, was Kraeling 1935. The text was re-edited by C. Welles for the Final Report of the Parchments and Papyri with minimal variations: Welles/Fink/Gilliam 1959, 73-74 with Pl. IV.1.

⁵⁴ Parker/Taylor/Goodacre 1999, 197, stress that the association with the chapel is not certain because the fragment does not originate from the building proper. Although they are right in theory, the anti-Marcionite tendency of both the gospel harmony and paintings as outlined below, does suggest that the fragment was used by the group that frequented the chapel.

⁵⁵ The literature on the Diatessaron is vast. In addition to Parker/Taylor/Goodacre 1999, see Petersen 1994, for extensive discussion.

⁵⁶ Parker/Taylor/Goodacre 1999, 228.

⁵⁷ Joosten 2003, 175.

⁵⁸ Drijvers 1996, 175.

⁵⁹ Parker/Taylor/Goodacre 1999, 214-215. Cf. Joosten 2003, 164, who notes that the reading is not entirely certain. All one can say is that this reading diverges from the standard gospel text.

⁶⁰ Parker/Taylor/Goodacre 1999, 197-198.

orthodox in the fourth century. In addition to a Pauline theology and ecclesiastical perspective, however, Antioch was home to Petrine and more typically Jewish views of what it meant to be Christian⁶¹. Ignatius' letters are modelled on Paul's writings, and refer very little to Jewish scriptures. Clayton Jefford takes this to mean that he was involved in a heated debate between Jews and gentiles. Furthermore, the writings of Bishops Theophilus (ca 169-177) and Serapion (190-211) suggest that struggles with the Jewish faction of the Antiochene community lasted at least until the beginning of the third century⁶².

Not only was the situation in Antioch much less clear-cut than is frequently assumed, but the division between the Greek-speaking West, in particular Antioch, and Syriac-speaking Christianities east of Antioch was also indistinct. As Han Drijvers points out, Syriac-speaking Christianities should in fact be seen as branches of early Christian theology that was developed in Antioch⁶³. Through the writings of Tatian, Bardaisan and other, mainly neo-Platonic channels, Greek philosophy contributed to the theological framework of Syriac-speaking Christianity, and connected it with the Greek-speaking West, particularly Antioch⁶⁴. In addition to the exchange of ideas, we may also note a continuous exchange of scriptures along the busy roads from Antioch to the east and *vice versa*. In short, we encounter a great variety of Christian groups in Syria in the second and third centuries A.D. It is largely unknown how big these groups were and how they related to each other. Where we should situate them geographically

is often unknown as well. This variety among Christian groups in both West and East Syria, and the often limited information we possess about them, simply makes it impossible to establish theological ideas on the basis of geographical origin.

Does this mean that the theological identity of the Christian community in Dura is bound to remain unknown? Although the available evidence does not allow the exact identification of their beliefs, there are a number of indicators about what they did *not* believe. Most telling in this respect is the fragment of the Diatessaron. Irrespective of the quest for its author, the document has great implications for the theological position of the Dura community. The Diatessaron emphasizes the need apparently felt in Mesopotamia and Syria in the second century for a harmonized text of the Gospels. This need was the direct result of the popularity of the teaching of Marcion (ca A.D. 110-160). Around the middle of the second century A.D., this bishop's son from Sinope in Pontus (modern Turkey) attempted to emancipate Christianity from its Jewish origins. Marcion was the first to interpret the Gospel message in the light of Middle Platonism. Focusing on Paul's antithesis of law and grace, Old and New Testament, Judaism and the Gospel for the Gentiles, Marcion formulated the doctrine of two gods. On the one hand, he postulated the jealous, evil Creator God of the Old Testament, and, on the other hand, the God of grace, the father of Jesus Christ, from the Gospels. He considered large parts of the Gospels to be forgeries, inserted by the evil Creator. In addition, he pointed out many inconsistencies in the major Gospels. Hence Marcion abolished the Jewish Holy Scriptures and retained of the Gospels and the Epistles only a heavily censored Gospel of Luke and ten of Paul's epistles, of which Galatians is the most important.

From the mid-second until the late fourth century, the Marcionites formed the majority of Christians in large areas in Syria and Mesopotamia⁶⁵. They were heavily opposed by a number of important second-century thinkers, of whom Tatian and Bardaisan were the most significant representatives. In order to confound Marcion and pagan critics, theologians such as Tatian created gospel harmonies⁶⁶. By making the four Gospels into one continuous story, they attempted to smooth out all the internal inconsistencies and contradictions⁶⁷. The fragment of the Diatessaron that was found in Dura strongly suggests that the Christians from Dura followed the tradition of these intellectuals.

⁶¹ Jefford 2005, 40-44.

⁶² On Theophilus, see Downey 1961, 301-302, who states that Theophilus owed much to Judaism. On Serapion, see Downey 1961, 304. According to Eusebius, Serapion wrote a letter to a Christian who had lapsed into Judaism.

⁶³ Drijvers 1974, 296-298.

⁶⁴ Drijvers 1985, 113.

⁶⁵ Drijvers 1987-1988 on Marcionism in Syria.

⁶⁶ Drijvers 1992, 130-131. For other possible motives that incited Tatian to create his gospel harmony, see Petersen 1994, 72-76.

⁶⁷ In the case of Tatian, his theological views dictated his selection and exact wording of the Gospel passages in his Diatessaron. We are well informed about Tatian's theological position through his *Oratio ad Graecos*. It can be shown that many of Tatian's ideas remained in vogue through the Diatessaron, which remained the most popular Gospel in Syria until the end of the fourth century. Since the use of the Diatessaron is indicative for certain theological ideas, it complicates matters that the fragment from Dura turns out to be not Tatian's.

The anti-Marcionite character of Christianity in Dura is confirmed by the scenes from the Jewish scriptures in the decoration of the baptistery. The scene of Adam and Eve, in particular, touches upon the core of Marcion's teachings. It is, after all, man's fall that led Marcion to believe in an imperfect Creator God in addition to the unknown good God. A good definition of the problems that led to Marcionite belief can be found in the opening sentence of Bardaisan's *Book of the Laws of Countries*:

*If God is One, as you say he is, and he has created mankind intending you to do what you are charged to, why did he not create mankind in such wise that they could not sin, but always did what was right? Thereby his desire would have been fulfilled*⁶⁸.

Against Marcion's belief in an envious Creator God, Marcion's adversaries advocated God's oneness, and the unity of Old and New Testament. In this respect, it is telling that the graffiti from the Dura baptistery reads *εἰς θεὸς ἐν οὐρανῷ*, 'One is God in heaven'⁶⁹.

We may conclude that there are no pressing arguments in favour of a western or a specifically Pauline influence on the decorative program of the Dura baptistery. In fact, the painting of Adam and Eve provides the only possible indication that Paul's idea on atonement was current. In view of the anti-Marcionite character of Christianity in Dura, however, it is extremely unlikely that Paul's teaching of redemption was ever popular here. Although we have no way of assigning the Christians of Dura to one of the many Christian groups that existed in the region at the time, we may conclude that the little we do know is compatible with ideas expressed by anti-Marcionite groups in the area east of Antioch in the third century.

ADAM AND EVE IN THE LIGHT OF BAPTISM IN THE SYRIAC-SPEAKING CHURCH

If Adam and Eve are the only proof possible that Paul's doctrine of atonement was crucial in the interpretation of baptism in Dura, we may rightfully ask whether it is possible to explain the primordial couple in the light of baptismal practices in the Syriac-speaking church. Surprisingly, this has never been attempted so far. In his analysis of the decoration of the Christian baptistery, Kraeling makes extensive use of writings of early Syriac

fathers, but the role of Adam and Eve in the salvation history of the Syriac Church has escaped his attention. Before we turn to investigating this possibility, however, it is worthwhile considering a methodological objection that has been raised to Kraeling's approach. For obvious reasons, Kraeling relates the meaning of the pictorial program to baptism, the ritual that took place in the room. Although he scrupulously cites documents only of eastern provenance, his reconstruction of the baptismal rite of Dura is largely based on written sources of post-Constantinian date. Annabel Wharton doubts whether these writings, that are the products of changed social circumstances and political settings, can be used to reconstruct baptismal practice in the third century⁷⁰.

Although Wharton's question is methodologically correct, it does not necessarily follow that all sources that were written at a later date have no explanatory value. Han Drijvers points out that the polemic with Marcion is a distinguishing feature in all Syrian theology, in its different forms, from the emergence of Syriac literature at the beginning of the second century, until Ephrem and Aphrat, the great Syriac poets at the end of the fourth century⁷¹. Ephrem is the first testimony of a radical opposition between orthodoxy and heresy in the Syriac church. At the end of the fourth century, he wrote his *Hymni against Heresies* and *Prose Refutations* against Marcion, Bardaisan and Mani. In his work against the Marcionites, Ephrem deals with the same Marcionite principles on creation and salvation history that occupied his predecessors. As a result, we may note a certain degree of continuity in 'orthodox' Syriac views on theological concepts about salvation history and anthropology. In the following section, I shall start with a discussion of Ephrem's views and subsequently turn to the testimonies from the preceding centuries that bear witness to the existence of similar theological concepts.

Baptism is frequently understood by Ephrem and other early Syriac fathers as a re-entering into

⁶⁸ Drijvers 1965, 5.

⁶⁹ Kraeling 1967, 95, no. 15. Drijvers 1984 points out that the frequency of the formula in Syrian inscriptions may be due to polemics with Marcion.

⁷⁰ Wharton 1995, 55.

⁷¹ Drijvers 1987-1988, 156.

paradise by recovering of the robe of glory⁷². Adam and Eve play a leading role in this drama of salvation, that is often presented in a clothing metaphor⁷³. Before the fall, the primordial couple was clothed in robes of glory. The concept of the robe of glory or robe of light, derives from Jewish thinking and was taken as a reference to the potential divine nature of man at creation⁷⁴. Adam and Eve are stripped of their robes of glory after they voluntarily make the wrong choice. From this moment onwards, humanity is clothed in garments of the flesh. The aim of the incarnation, according to Ephrem and other Syriac writers, is to re-clothe mankind in their robes of glory. To this end, the Divinity himself 'puts on Adam' when he puts on a body.

The robe of glory, lost by Adam and Eve, can be recovered in baptism. Of central importance to the ritual of baptism is Christ's descent into the Jordan River, for it is then that he deposits his robe of glory in the water, thus making it available for mankind to put on during baptism. As such, baptism is a re-entry into Paradise, not just the Paradise of the beginning of time, but also an eschatological Paradise, of which the Church is the terrestrial anticipation. In his hymns, Ephrem compares this transitional area to the position of Adam and Eve immediately after the fall. After their expulsion from Paradise, Adam and Eve lived at the foot of

the mountain where Paradise was thought to be⁷⁵. After baptism, the newborn Christian resides in the same environs. This is why Ephrem speaks of the Christian as grazing outside Paradise:

*Have pity on me, O Lord of Paradise, and if it is not possible for me to enter your Paradise grant that I may graze outside, by its enclosure within, let there be spread the table for the diligent, but may the fruits within its enclosure drop outside like the crumbs for sinners so that, through Your grace, they may live*⁷⁶!

The overriding question is whether this theological concept was part of earlier baptismal traditions in the area. Information on the baptismal rite in Syria in the second and early third century is limited to two texts, the *Didache* and the *Acts of the Apostle Judas Thomas*⁷⁷. As I hope to have shown above, ideas about baptism are bound up with a distinctive anthropology and view on salvation history, in which Adam and Eve play prominent roles. For this reason, passages that do not explicitly mention baptism, but that touch upon these issues, may be used to complement the reconstruction. The *Didache*, that was composed somewhere in Syria between the late first and early third century, contains a moral code for the Christian community, followed by a description of the rituals of the cult, among which is baptism. The apocryphal *Acts of the Apostle Judas Thomas* were written in Syriac at the beginning of the third century, probably in Edessa⁷⁸. The work is the account of the apostle Thomas, who travelled all the way to India to preach the gospel and finally died a martyr.

The *Acts of Thomas* are particularly interesting from a theological point of view. The contents of the *Acts* are dominated by the struggle against corruption. The action that especially represents corruption is 'filthy intercourse' and for this reason Thomas preaches a gospel of abstinence. The prototype of sexual continence is the situation of Adam and Eve before the fall. Sexual abstinence, or *enkrateia*, brings man back to the situation of paradisiacal immortality before the fall. Hence abstinence from sexual intercourse served a higher aim, the return to man's original state⁷⁹. Abstinence is sealed by baptism, which is understood as purification and bestows future protection against enemies⁸⁰. When General Sifur asks the apostle to baptise him and his family, he wishes to be reckoned

⁷² In general, see Brock 1979 and *idem* 1992.

⁷³ Brock 1982; Kowalski 1982.

⁷⁴ Kowalski 1982, esp. 47-50.

⁷⁵ Van Rompay 1993.

⁷⁶ Ephrem, *Hymns on Paradise* V, 15. Cf. Brock 1990, 107-108.

⁷⁷ Wharton 1995, 55-60, heavily relies on these two texts that are hardly used at all by Kraeling 1967. The literature on both documents is extensive. For a recent edition of the text of the *Acts of Thomas*, with introduction, commentary and extensive references for further reading, see Klijn 2003. On the *Didache* see Milavec 2003.

⁷⁸ Drijvers 1992, 132; Klijn 2003, 15.

⁷⁹ Drijvers 1982, 170-171.

⁸⁰ On the meaning of baptism in the *Acts of Thomas*, see Varghese 1989, 3-15. It has been suggested that baptism was restricted to virgins in the early Syriac Church. Although it is not certain whether this was the general rule, it is clear that among certain Christian groups sexual abstinence was important with respect to baptism and the Christian life that followed. On this, see Anderson 2001, Murray 1974, and Vööbus 1951. Unfortunately, we have no way of knowing whether this was the case in Dura as well.

among the number of his flock and his sheep⁸¹. Through baptism, man becomes a member of God's flock, i.e. the Church.

The central theme of Thomas' theology is man's regaining paradise lost through the proper use of his free will⁸². As with Ephrem, sin and atonement are not emphasized in the *Acts of Thomas*. What is central is the idea that man lost his divine nature with the fall, and that this nature can be regained through Christ. This theology is not confined to the *Acts of Thomas*. Han Drijvers points out that all these characteristics are already found in theological guise in Tatian's *Oratio ad Graecos*, dated to the second half of the second century⁸³. In Tatian's view, the divine Logos created man as an immortal being. Man made the wrong use of his free will and became a mortal and sexual being. Immortality, may be regained if man lets God dwell in him through the Spirit. Since only a pure body is fit to receive the Spirit, *enkrateia*, sexual abstinence, is a prerequisite for regaining divine nature⁸⁴.

Sebastian Brock has convincingly shown that the clothing metaphor used by Ephrem for the history of salvation is deeply ingrained in the Syriac tradition⁸⁵. It is expressed most eloquently in the famous 'Hymn of the Pearl' in the *Acts of Thomas*⁸⁶. This hymn describes the whereabouts of an Iranian prince who leaves his homeland for Egypt, in order to bring back the pearl which is guarded by the serpent. When he leaves his country, his glittering robe is taken from him by his parents. Only once he has killed the serpent and retrieved the pearl does he regain his robe⁸⁷. As with Tatian and Ephrem, the prince's glittering robe symbolizes the divine nature of the human soul, that was lost and retrieved through Christ⁸⁸. We may conclude that man's regaining of paradise was a continuous theme in Syriac theology in different forms right from the beginning of Syriac literature. The main difference between the early and later writers is the much less negative evaluation of the material world and sexuality among orthodox Syriac writers of later times. Notwithstanding this difference, however, the ideas of Ephrem and other orthodox Syriac writers are not a novelty, but elaborate upon a continuous tradition in which man's regaining of paradise is a central theme⁸⁹.

Brock has pointed out that Syriac theology of clothing with respect to baptism is something essentially Semitic, that differs profoundly from native Greek traditions⁹⁰. Whereas Greek and Latin writers

are interested in the purification of the soul and emphasize what is *taken off* during baptism, Syriac writers are far more concerned with what garment is *put on* during baptism: the paradisiacal robe of glory, i.e., man's original divine nature. It is for this reason that sin and atonement do not figure prominently in baptism in early Syriac Christianity⁹¹.

If Christianity in Dura-Europos belongs to this Syriac tradition, which seems likely in view of its anti-Marcionite character, as discussed above, there is no reason to conclude from the representation of Adam and Eve that the theological ideas of the apostle Paul were current here. On the contrary, the decoration above the font in the Dura baptistery may be satisfactorily explained in the light of the Syriac view on salvation history outlined in this article. Before baptism, the initiate was like Adam and Eve after the fall, who covered their loss of the robe of glory with foliage. Through immersion in the water, the neophyte retrieved the robe of glory; when the new Christian rose to his feet, he was greeted by the Good Shepherd and his sheep. They symbolize the Church, which is an anticipation of eschatological Paradise. The paradisiacal state that was lost with Adam and Eve was retrieved through baptism. Seen in this light, Adam and Eve are certainly in their proper place in the baptistery of Dura-Europos.

⁸¹ *Acts of Thomas*, Ch. 131: Klijn 2003, 214. Cf. Quasten 1947, 5-6.

⁸² Klijn 2003, 114.

⁸³ Drijvers 1982, 172-173; *idem* 1985, 111. On Tatian's theology, see Elze 1960, especially 88-100.

⁸⁴ Drijvers 1992, 129.

⁸⁵ Brock 1982, 11-38. Cf. also Kowalski 1982.

⁸⁶ Klijn 2003.

⁸⁷ *Acts of Thomas*, Chs 108-113. Cf. Klijn 2003, 182-187 (text), 187-195.

⁸⁸ Brock 1982, 21; Klijn 2003, 195.

⁸⁹ Drijvers 1974, 301.

⁹⁰ Anderson 2001, 132; Brock 1982, 22.

⁹¹ If the hypothesis that the Christians of Dura belong to Syriac traditions is correct, it follows that the interpretation of Adam and Eve and the Good Shepherd proposed by Dassmann 1973, 375-376, can be rejected. According to Dassmann, Adam and Eve represent original sin, whereas the shepherd is the Good Shepherd who saves his sheep and forgives their sins. Dassmann 1973, 332-333, n. 1, refers to the *Acts of Thomas* Ch. 132 to substantiate the idea that baptism signified remission of sins in the early Syriac Church. However, throughout the *Acts of Thomas*, it is made clear that it is in fact intercourse that is central, not sin in general.

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*Playing with Light and Shadow: The Stuccoes of Deir al-Surian and Their Historical Context*¹

Mat IMMERZEEL

*Une description toute verbale, comme celle tentée par E. White, complique les choses et égare l'esprit dans le jeu de toutes ces lignes combinées avec des éléments de décors floraux stylisés et reproduits en à-plat ou en léger relief qui permettent aux ombres et aux lumières de s'insinuer entre les éléments ornementaux pour les éclairer ou les faire disparaître selon les heures du jour ou la position prise par le spectateur*².

This impression of the ornamented tenth-century plaster reliefs in the Church of al-ʿAdra in Deir al-Surian (Monastery of the Syrians), in the Wadi al-Natrun (Egypt) was written down by Jules Leroy in 1974. When observing the optical effects caused by the penetration of sunlight in the intimate room where these stuccoes are applied one is tempted to go along with Leroy's admiration. Nevertheless, in spite of his doubts concerning the adequacy of a purely formal approach of these works of art, an accurate description certainly helps to understand them, and to assign them their place in the history of the monastery and its rich artistic past.

To start with a more down-to-earth observation, plaster reliefs were a cheap and locally easily available substitute for stone sculpture, and had the advantage of allowing the covering of large surfaces. Ornamentation of this kind was widely appreciated and suitable in any religious or secular context, and its application a matter of adapting the overall design to the architectural structures defined by the function of buildings. The technique of decorating walls and ceilings with ornamented plasterwork goes back to Classical Antiquity. In the Middle East, the Sassanids adorned their palaces and houses with suchlike decoration³, a tradition held high during the reign of the Umayyads, the new rulers from the seventh century onwards⁴, and during that of their Abbasid successors. The application of stuccoes also extended to churches, in particular in Iraq and the

Gulf area. In a church erected around the turn of the seventh century in Kokhe, the residence of the East Syrian katholikos, in the vicinity of the Sassanid capital Seleucia-Ctesiphon near Baghdad, ornamental gilded and coloured stuccoes in the Sassanid fashion decorated the walls; a plaster statue of a saint was discovered in the sanctuary⁵. Similar finds in churches located on the shores of the Persian Gulf, presumably of the East Syrian denomination, add much to the picture⁶. Moreover, archaeological fieldwork in and near the Syrian Orthodox stronghold Takrit, north of Baghdad, has brought to light plasterwork comparable to that of Deir al-Surian, e.g. in a monastery at al-Chenisa and in several churches in the citadel⁷. In churches in Europe, too, the application of stucco decorations was widespread from the fifth through the twelfth centuries, in particular in France, Germany, Spain, and Italy (e.g. Ravenna and Cividale)⁸.

Despite this abundance of discoveries, our possibilities to compare the stuccoes of Deir al-Surian with other examples in a Christian context are restricted. Stuccoes conserved *in situ* are rare, as the material is vulnerable and could easily be reused. This makes the reliefs of Deir al-Surian even more exceptional. They have resisted the ravages of time mainly because the monastery was almost permanently

¹ This article is an updated version of Immerzeel 2004b, which was published with wrong illustrations and moreover is difficult to find. See also Immerzeel 2000; *idem* 2004a; *idem* 2009, 28-32. Other recent or forthcoming publications are Hunt 2003, and Snelders forthcoming, Ch. 3.

² Leroy 1974a, 161.

³ Kröger 1982.

⁴ Ettinghausen/Grabar 1987, 56-71; Hamilton 1953; Talbot Rice 1975, 22-24; Talgam 2004, with references to earlier studies.

⁵ Cassis 2002; Kröger 1982, 45-58, Abb. 17, Taf. 11, 12.

⁶ Calvet 2005-2006.

⁷ Harrak 2001.

⁸ Cf. Catalogue Poitiers 2004; Sapin 2006.

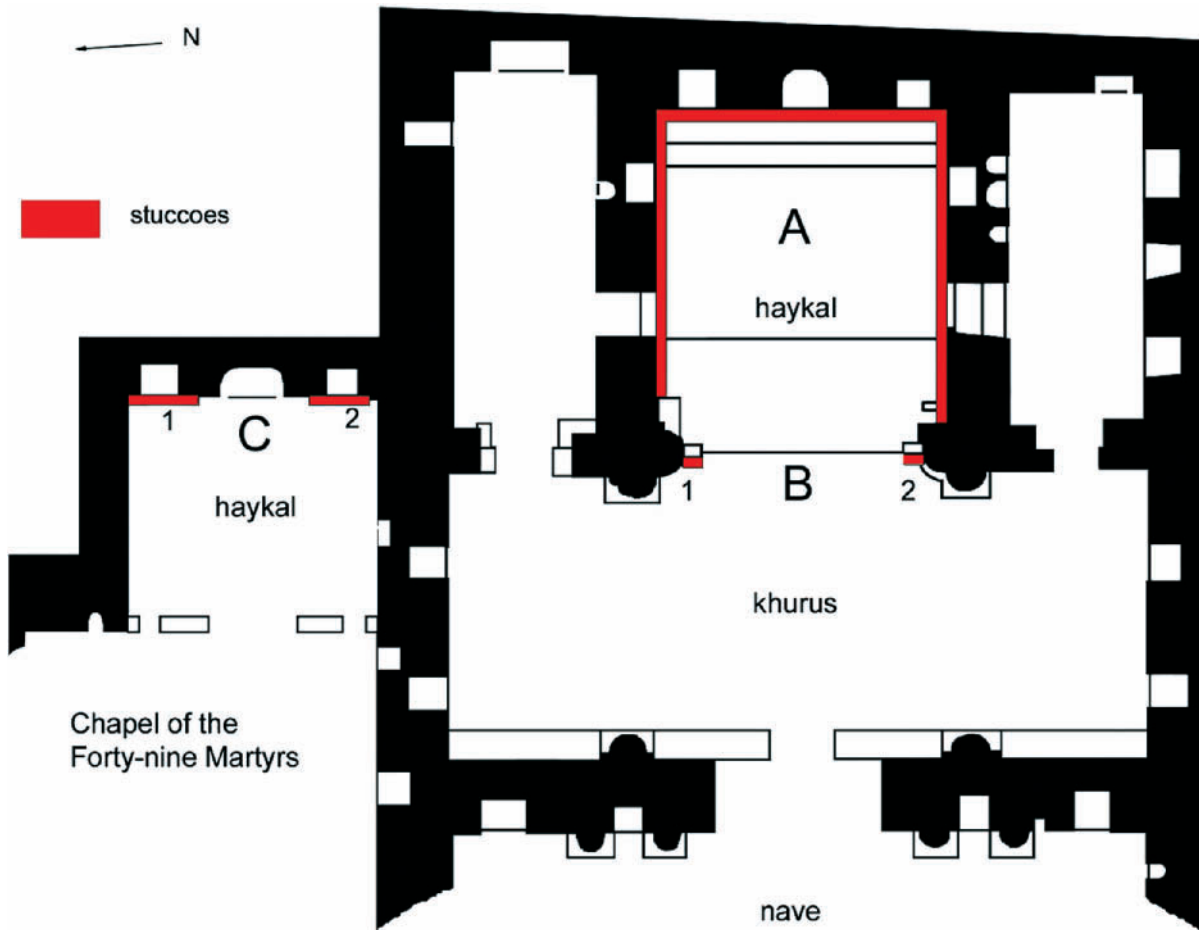


Fig. 1. Deir al Surian; location of the stuccoes (drawing author)

inhabited. Meanwhile, in spite of several restoration campaigns, its church has remained relatively well intact over the ages. The stuccoes are present in the square sanctuary (*haykal*; A on Fig. 1; Fig. 2; Pls 1-8) and the room linking the nave with the altar room (*khurus*; B on Fig. 1), as well as in the adjoining Chapel of the Forty-nine Martyrs (C on Fig. 1; Pl. 9). In the eighteenth century a damaged part of the by then over eight centuries-old decoration in the *haykal* was replaced, while new panels with coarse motifs were added to this room as well as to the *khurus* and the nave.

DESCRIPTION

The rectangular *haykal* (length 4.09 m, width 4.17 m, height ca 10 m) is covered with a dome resting on an octagonal zone. A central niche dominates the east wall, and is flanked by two smaller

ones. Similar niches and doorways giving access to the adjoining rooms (*pastophoria*) are present in the north and south walls.

The stuccoes are applied at two levels (Fig. 2). At eye level, the niches and doorways are framed with rectangular fields, the one around the central niche being the most elaborate. At a level of about three to four meters panels alternate with windows consisting of a stucco framework. Below this zone runs a frieze, which is interrupted only by the framework of the central niche. As the adjacent rooms are fairly lofty, the windows in the north and south walls do not let in daylight, while those in the east wall have been closed and covered with stucco panels in the 1780s (Pls 3, 4). Hence, daylight only enters through windows in the octagonal zone and the dome.

On the east wall the spandrels of the frame of the central niche contain a circle. Vine scrolls cover the remainder of the surface (Pls 5, 6). The jambs

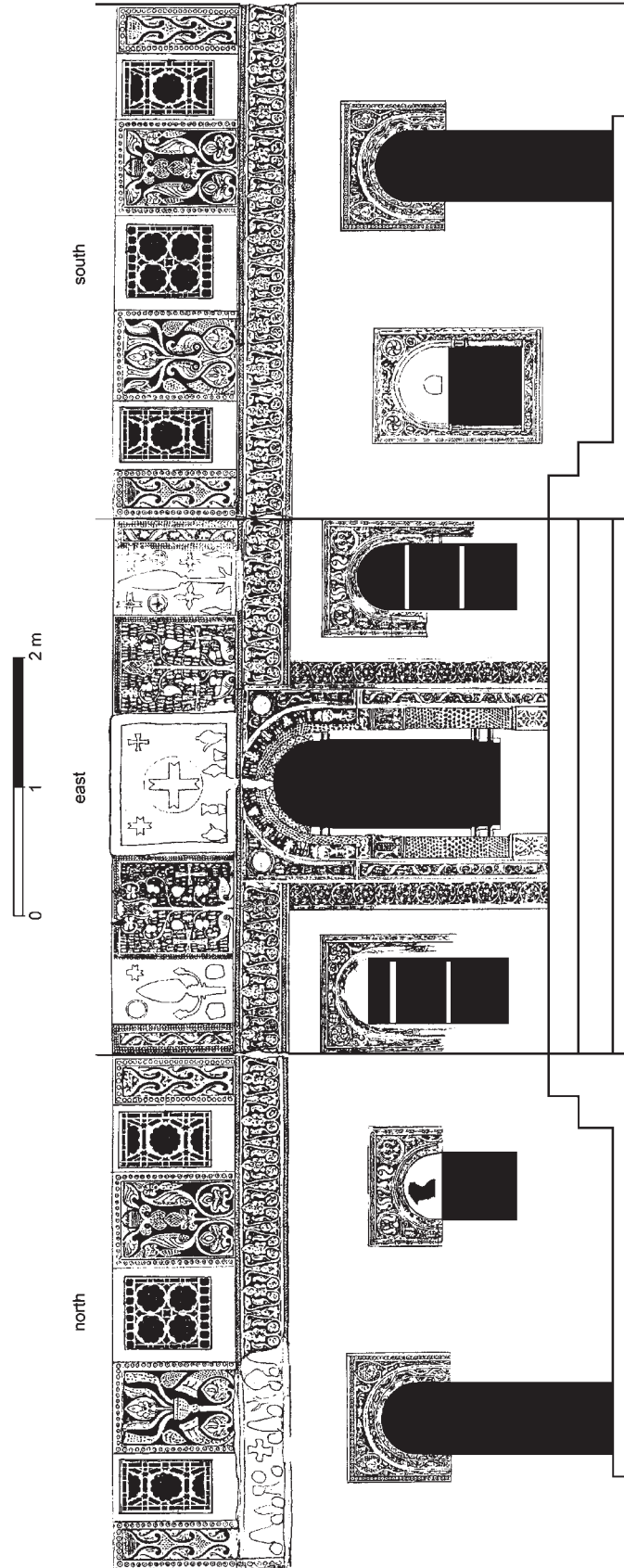


Fig. 2. Succoes in the haykal (drawing author, after Evelyn White 1933, Pls LXII, LXIX)

are figured with narrow leaves in low relief. A slightly protruding frame consisting of two half-columns and a stilted arch surrounds the niche. The capitals show leaf ornaments, and on top of them a vase containing flowers is rendered. Both elements are in high relief. The arch consists of two parts, the outer one being decorated with undulating stalks, connecting a continuous pattern of palmettes and alternating with leaves, while the inner is decorated with diagonally crossing lines. At the sides shafts with bases and capitals carry a secondary arch with a lozenge pattern. Vertical bands with a flat foliated scroll border the frames.

At the upper zone both corner panels are decorated with an undulating leaf pattern (Pl. 4). On the two panels between the former windows a central vine-like stem rises, culminating in a flower or fruit at the top, while curving stems, tendrils, leaves and fruits fill the background (Pls 3, 4). Two crosses flank the stem. The three later panels overlapping the former windows are in low relief. The central one has an encircled cross in the centre, while the outer panels are provided with a tree ornament. To these elements more crosses and objects such as small trees, a vessel and a cup are added.

On the north and south walls the four narrow panels to the extreme left and right are decorated with a straight vegetal ornament ending at the top in a chalice-like object (Pls 2, 7). At intervals along the stems symmetrical excrescences terminate in leaves. The two panels between the windows are conceived in a plant form with a central stem. The leaves are five-lobed palmettes, with additional leaves, pointed and rounded fruits or clusters.

The frieze shows a continuous pattern consisting of a palmette motif in high relief upon a double stalk, which curves outward and then upward enclosing a bunch of fruit and dominates the leaves filling the background (Pls 2, 4, 7, 8). A fruit alternates with this motif. The left part of the frieze on the north wall has been replaced by an eighteenth-century coarse imitation with a cross (Pl. 2).

The small niches have rectangular frameworks in low relief surrounding their upper half with circular ornaments and scrolls in the spandrels, and slender shafts surmounted by an arch. The frameworks on the north and south walls resemble those of the niches in the east wall, but the spandrels of the doorways show a protruding floral element instead of a circular ornament. A decorated panel at the top of the niche in the north wall has partly survived.

The jambs of the wooden screens between the *khurus* and the *haykal* are inserted into narrow walls to the left and the right of the entrance. These do not belong to the original architecture, but were without any doubt added to support the woodwork construction. The additions are covered with a layer of plaster bearing that decoration at the front inside the *khurus* consisting of a repeated motif including a stylised vase and vegetal ornamentation. The panels partly cover the encaustic paintings of two standing soldier saints (perhaps Sergius and Bacchus) on the bordering half-columns. Hence these paintings must be older than the stucco layer and the woodwork⁹.

The Chapel of the Forty-nine Martyrs consists of three parts, the *haykal* being the oldest. Its east wall has three niches with fragments of murals, the outer ones being framed by rectangular fields of plasterwork (Pl. 9). In the thirteenth century the insides of the niches were repainted with the images of St Mark to the right, whose name is written in Syriac, and St Peter (?) to the left, and the Virgin with the Child (centre)¹⁰. The frameworks show elements comparable to those in the church. In the spandrels a large leaf curves outwards, while the remainder of the surface is filled with an undulating stem and leaves. The architectural framing consists of two half-columns with bases and capitals on which an arch with a floral pattern is placed. A rectangular field in high relief, filled with leaves and palmettes, is applied on top.

ABBASID STUCCOES: STYLE AND ARCHITECTURAL APPLICATION

Assessing their style, the stuccoes in Deir al-Surian belong to an oriental group of purely ornamental plasterwork from the ninth and tenth centuries. Their evident affinities with other stuccoes in Egypt, in particular those in the late ninth-century Mosque of al-Maydan, better known as the Mosque

⁹ Innemée/Grossmann/Jenner/Van Rompay 1998, 88, Figs 10, 11 (saint on the right half-column; the saint on the opposite half-column has not been published yet).

¹⁰ Judging from their stylistic features, these murals can be attributed to the painter who worked in the Church of al-Adra of Deir al-Baramus; van Loon 1999, 73-74, 104, 195, 198.

of Ibn Tulun, was noticed by Joseph Strzygowski in 1901 and Samuel Flury in 1916¹¹. Flury also pointed at the similarities between the stuccoes in Egypt and the many plaster ornaments that Ernst Herzfeld had discovered some years earlier at the site of Samarra in present-day Iraq¹². For a while this Mesopotamian city had been the political centre of the Islamic world; it was the capital of the Abbasid rulers between A.D. 836 and 892, and the stuccoes must have been made in this time span. It was the perfect material for the brand new city, which had to be erected from mudbrick in a trice¹³. Although Herzfeld had published the Samarran material in 1923 already, Hugh Evelyn White did not work out the obvious 'Mesopotamian connection' in his detailed study of the Wadi al-Natrun monasteries from the 1930s¹⁴. Given the fact that the monastery was populated with monks from this region for centuries (see below), there are enough reasons to turn our view eastward.

The reliefs in the mosque and the monastery are not the only stuccoes in the Abbasid style in Egypt. Many fragments came to light at the site of Fustat near Old Cairo. These remained unstudied so far; a few elements only are on permanent exhibition in the Islamic Museum in Cairo. Another example *in situ* is a modest fragment to the left of the entrance in the north wall of the *haykal* of St Macarius in Deir Abu Maqar (Monastery of St Macarius), south of Deir al-Surian (Pl. 11). Outside Egypt and Iraq the Abbasid style is represented in Iran, for example in the Friday Mosque in Isfahan¹⁵, the Mosque of Nayin (about 960)¹⁶ and Nishapur¹⁷, while in Afghanistan stuccoes fill the walls of the ninth-century mosque of Mashid-I-Ta'rikh at Balkh¹⁸. All these strongly resemble the art of Samarra, which is more or less situated in the centre of the distribution area.

Herzfeld made a first attempt to distinguish three styles, which he argued represent a chronological sequence, but as combinations appear on several occasions the formal diversity reflects differences in fashion rather than in time. Herzfeld's classification is still valuable, but Creswell reversed his sequence¹⁹. The so-called Style A (Herzfeld Style 3) includes carved vine ornaments in the Late Antique tradition, rendered in a very plastic and naturalistic manner, while Style B (Herzfeld Style 2) is characterized by anti-naturalistic, more stylised vegetal compositions. Style C (Herzfeld Style 1) shows an abstract bevelled moulding, and seems to be derived from Central Asian ornamental art.

These styles are represented in Deir al-Surian as well. Ornaments of Style A dominate, while, for example, the panels between the windows on the north and south walls in the *haykal* contain elements of Style B (Pls 3, 7, 8). The outermost panels at window level on these walls are typical representatives of Style C (Pls 3, 7), just like the fragment in Deir Abu Maqar (Pl. 11). Yet the stylistic classification of the Abbasid stuccoes is not the most important item for their characterization; the almost unrestricted possibilities to combine different elements according to their architectural functionality also have to be taken into account. In the palaces and houses at Samarra stuccoes served as a covering of mudbrick walls. In the mosque in Cairo, on the other hand, they mainly emphasize the stone arcade structure (Pl. 10). Here, friezes consisting of continuing strips of undulating patterns frame the pointed arches over the piers and the windows at a higher level. In addition, ornamental panels are applied at their soffits. The limitation to border decoration is repeated consequently on the piers, at the corners of which engaged colonnettes with stucco capitals seem to support the arches although they are entirely decorative.

If we turn to look at Deir al-Surian again, the decoration has affinities with both concepts. The Samarran layout of surface filling characterizes the higher level of the altar room of the church, while the border decoration of the mosque can be found mainly in the edges of the niches. In the central niche of the *haykal* the half-columns and capitals are variants on those in the mosque, while the

¹¹ Flury 1913; *idem* 1916; Strzygowski 1901, 357-358.

¹² Herzfeld 1923.

¹³ 'The labor-saving properties of the moulded bevelled style were ideally suited to the mushroom growth of Samara, and the humble mud-brick of which even the palaces were mostly built was cheaply and effectively disguised by the mass-produced decoration.'; Hillenbrand 1999, 43.

¹⁴ Evelyn White 1933, 197, 204-207; Pls LXVI-LXXI.

¹⁵ Creswell/Allan 1989, 347.

¹⁶ Dimand 1958, 89-90; Ettinghausen/Grabar 1987, 212-213, Pls 210, 212, 213.

¹⁷ See the examples in Wilkinson 1986.

¹⁸ Creswell/Allan 1989, 348-349, Pl. 225; Ettinghausen/Grabar 1987, 214, Pl. 216; Golombek 1969; Hillenbrand 1999, 43, Figs 25-27; Hoag 1975, 28-30, Figs 36, III.

¹⁹ Creswell/Allan 1989, 374-376; Ettinghausen/Grabar 1987, 101-105, Figs 78-80; Hillenbrand 1999, 43, Figs 25-27; see also Talbot Rice 1975, 32-34, Figs 24-26.

border of its arch is filled with a similar undulating vegetal ornament (Pls 5, 10).

One particularity in the church is the contrasting difference between the slightly protruding high relief above eye level and the flat design of the lower parts. At this point we have to turn again to Leroy's impressions about the typical play of light. Seen from a higher level, the protruding elements bend slightly towards the beholder inside the *haykal* (Pl. 8). Obviously the relative darkness in the room inspired the stucco workers to profit at maximum of the daylight entering through the windows. To this purpose they have sought to produce an optical illusion to give more depth to the reliefs. The constantly changing light fall emphasizes the protruding parts more than would have been the case if their relief has been low, and consequently seems to play with the shapes. In the Chapel of the Forty-nine Martyrs the same concept has been repeated: the relief of the frameworks is fairly flat, that of the fields at the top high.

CHRISTIAN ASPECTS IN THE DECORATION

Apart from the crosses on the east wall strictly spoken nothing in the decoration makes the stuccoes typically Christian (Pl. 4). It is true that vegetal ornaments such as vine scrolls as well as vases or vessels from which vegetation sprouts belonged to the traditional Christian repertory, but these motifs had their origin in Antiquity while they were also familiar to Islamic art. More puzzling is what is absent in the plasterwork: there are no figurative elements. This is even more striking if we take into consideration the presence of Christ Emmanuel, the Virgin and several saints, with Coptic inscriptions and composed of inlaid bone or ivory, on the wooden screens or folding doors between the *khurus* and *haykal*, which appear to be contemporary to the stuccoes (see below)²⁰, and the many wall paintings in the *khurus* which must have been visible, or perhaps partly painted, when the stuccoes were made²¹. The question is whether this choice for a non-figurative programme was inspired by theological reflections or

not. Iconoclasm had ended in 843; it was no longer a hot issue when the stuccoes were applied, and likely never was at that place, and can therefore not have been of any influence. Either the stucco workers were not skilled in representing human figures, or they or their commissioners preferred to remain faithful to the fashionable ornamental repertoire of Abbasid reliefs. Perhaps the monks considered figurative representations not suitable in an altar room.

What qualifies the Christian contents of the reliefs is the overall design, in particular in the *haykal* of the church. In the Mosque of Ibn Tulun the plastered edges of the arcades emphasize the structure of the building with their consequently repeated ornamentation. As far as the borders and columns of the niches and doorways are concerned, the situation in Deir al-Surian is similar, but the composition as a totality is more the expression of a particular religious function than is the case in the mosque. The design in the *haykal* was worked out to give a spatial effect paying respect to the increasing importance of orientation towards the East that is inherent in church architecture and liturgy. Seen from the entrance the altar seems to be surrounded with a subtle play of daylight, as if it has a nimbus, or crown, while pertinently the decoration accumulates at the central niche. The effect is an almost metaphysical atmosphere. This brings us to the symbolic meaning of the decoration. In many churches the image of Christ, or a cross, appears in the apse, which Paul van Moorsel has called '... the place where the Divine can manifest itself.'²² The altar room is the place where one is allowed to look straight into heaven, and in this context the 'crown of light', with its rich vegetation, could very well be considered a creative interpretation of the heavenly paradise.

The artistic *language* of the stuccoes in Deir al-Surian has its roots in the Christian tradition, which, in its turn, was derived from that of Late Antiquity. Nevertheless, the *vocabulary* of the plasterwork – the isolated motifs – is that of other Abbasid works. The artists made use of the decorative fashion of their time, but they simultaneously fully respected the Christian function of the building.

THE DATE OF THE STUCCOES

The similarities between the stuccoes in the monastery and those in Samarra as well as in the Mosque of Ibn Tulun are indicative for a dating in the ninth or tenth century. Samarra was founded as the capital

²⁰ Bolman 2006, 91-92, Figs 16, 24; Evelyn White 1933, 197-200; Immerzeel 2004a, 1309-1310, 1312; Jeudy 2007, 121-125, Figs 1, 2, 4, 5; Leroy 1974a, 153-161.

²¹ Innemée/Van Rompay/Sobczynski 1999, I; Innemée/Van Rompay 2002. The painting in the niche of the eastern wall of the *haykal* is a modern addition.

²² Van Moorsel 2000, 107.

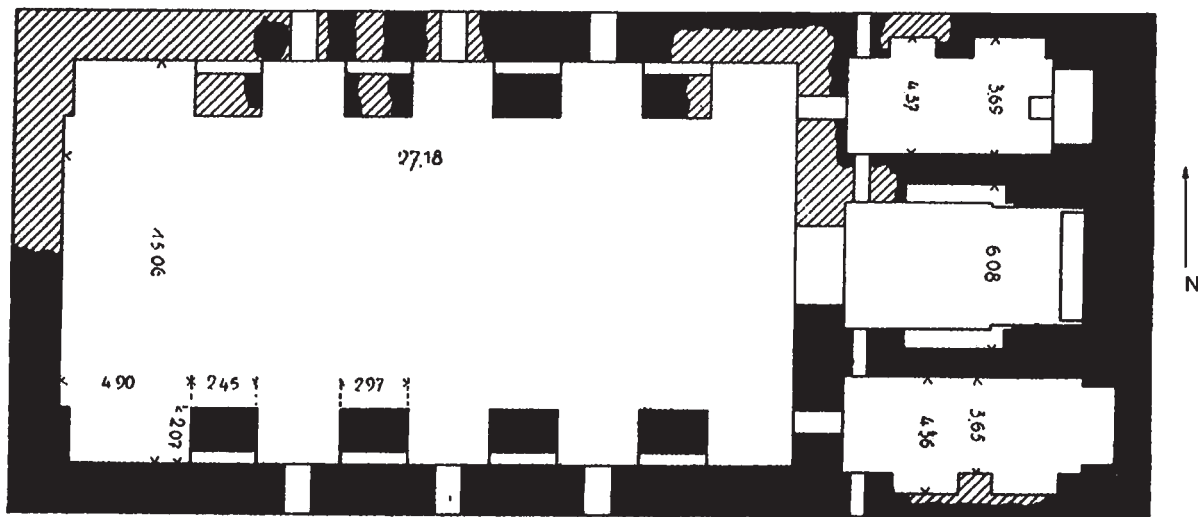


Fig. 3. Plan of the church in Kokhe (after Kröger 1982, Abb. 17)

of the Abbasid rulers in 836, but the city was deprived of its most prominent inhabitants from 892 onward, when the court was moved to Baghdad, and hence lost its importance. The Mosque of Ibn Tulun was inaugurated in 879, which means that its stuccoes were made when Samarra was still flourishing. Although the ninth century was the main period of the Abbasid style, the example of the reliefs in the Mosque of Nayin in Iran from ca 960 demonstrates the continuity in its development during the next century.

Turning to the population of Deir al-Surian, the name of the monastery keeps the memory of a centuries-long Syrian Orthodox occupation alive. The first Syrian monks settled in the monastery in the early ninth century²³. One of the first activities of this group, of which the names of the Fathers Mattay and Yaʿqub from Takrit have come down to us, was to carry out some necessary rebuilding work in the seventh-century church²⁴. A Syriac inscription on the northern wall of the nave mentions the Seleucid year 1130 (A.D. 818/819) as the year of (re)construction²⁵.

Regarding the architectural situation in the eastern part of the church, it is obvious that the straight-backed *haykal* is not part of the original construction. Karel Innemée suggests that, given the presence of large apses at the north and south side of the *khurus*, the east end of the church may have had the shape of a triconch²⁶. Anticipating the outcome of his ongoing investigation of the architecture, it

makes sense to write the construction of the *haykal* on the account of the Syrian inhabitants of the monastery, mainly because of its rather particular square shape. In this respect it resembles the sanctuary of the aforementioned church in Kokhe in central Mesopotamia (Fig. 3). The question is now when the hypothetical eastern apse of the triconch was replaced with the present altar room. Although it is still far from clear if the original construction was extant in the early ninth century, the present *haykal* cannot be written on the account of Mattay and Yaʿqub. A Syriac inscription on the lintel and the left jamb of the wooden screens at the entrance of the room suggests a second rebuilding campaign about one century later:

To the praise and magnification and glory and exaltation of the venerable, and holy, and consubstantial Trinity. Moses [of Nisibis] the Abbot took pains and built and raised up this altar of the Church of

²³ The Syrian Orthodox presence would last until the early sixteenth century. The Syrians fell under the jurisdiction of the patriarch of Alexandria, but had their own customs and traditions; the monastery had a mixed Syrian-Coptic community which was headed by a Syrian abbot (den Heijer 2004, 923-938; see also Fiey 1972-1973).

²⁴ Innemée/Van Rompay 1998, 184-186; Van Rompay/Schmidt 2001, with references to earlier studies.

²⁵ Van Rompay/Schmidt 2001, 50-51.

²⁶ Innemée 1995.

*the Mother of God, in the days of the patriarchs, Mar Gabriel and Mar John, in the year 1225 of the Greeks, in the month of Iyor, upon the fifteenth of the same; that God, for whose holy Name's sake (he did this), may be unto him a recompenser for good, and unto every believer who has obtained a lot in this altar and this holy monastery, for the saving of his life and its preservation, and for the blotting out of (the sins) of his departed ones, and for the forgiveness of his (own) sins*²⁷.

The inscription refers to the consecration of a new altar on 15 Iyor A.G. 1225, corresponding to 15 May A.D. 914²⁸, but in fact it tells us more. Leroy has remarked that *mabbho*, the Syriac word for altar, is also used for the altar room in general²⁹. This puts the inscription in a different light: it seems to be related to the construction of the entire *haykal* followed by the official inauguration in 914. The initiator of this prestigious project was the illustrious Moses of Nisibis, Abbot of Deir al-Surian from approx. 907 to 943, whose name also appears in manuscripts and in a Coptic inscription just below the dome of the *khurus*³⁰.

The year mentioned in the inscription helps to date the stuccoes as well, mainly because of the decorated panels on the narrow walls which were constructed to support the doorjambs. Yet fieldwork executed by Karel Innemée (Leiden University) in June 2002 has revealed a more complicated situation. When investigating the plaster behind the doors and the stuccoes on the doorjambs, Innemée did not find a direct stratified link between the construction of the doors and the erection of the *haykal*. He suggests that the altar room may be of

a later date³¹. How much later is a matter requiring further investigation, but the chronological gap cannot be very large. As the altar would only have been consecrated after the work was finished and rounded off with the application of the commemorative inscription, 15 May A.D. 914 appears to be the *terminus ante quem* for the entire construction. Since Moses of Nisibis was probably already abbot in 907³², when his name was mentioned for the first time, it could reasonably be assumed that the *haykal* was built and refurbished between about 907 and 914.

For the later reliefs a dating about 1780 is ascertained, as the most recent layer of plaster covering the walls of the church was applied in this period³³. Stuccoes comparable to the additions in the *haykal* are included in the same layer in the nave – on several columns and above the entrance to the *khurus* – and on the western wall of the *khurus* itself. Exceptional is a small pedestal with stucco decoration showing an angel in the nave, to the left of the entrance of the *khurus* (Pl. 12). It would belong to a thirteenth-century layer of plaster³⁴.

THE TAKRITAN CONNECTION

The first Syrian inhabitants in the monastery originated from Takrit in the southern Tigris valley (Mesopotamia), about 100 km north of Baghdad. By that time Syrian monks had already been living in Egypt for centuries, but monks were not the only Mesopotamians in this country. Many fellow countrymen had moved to Fustat, amongst whom a number of Takritan Christians³⁵.

The relationship of the monks with the Christian Takritans must have been tight, in particular with the colony in Fustat³⁶. It has been suggested that the influence of this lay community was the real reason of the Syrian presence in the monastery. In three texts the purchase of the monastery by Takritans from Fustat on behalf of the Syrian monks living in Egypt is quoted. The man behind this project was Marutha, son of the high-ranking functionary Habbib. But the texts concerned are suspect because they are rather late: one is dated A.D. 1562, another A.D. 1607, and the date of the third is uncertain³⁷. So far no contemporary evidence justifying this claim has been found³⁸. Another event illustrates the importance of Deir al-Surian to the Syrians in the Tigris valley. Although Abbot Moses came from Nisibis in northern Mesopotamia, he continued the existing contacts

²⁷ Evelyn White 1933, 197.

²⁸ Innemée/Van Rompay/Sobczynski 1999, II, §1.

²⁹ Leroy 1974a, 161.

³⁰ Innemée/Van Rompay/Sobczynski 1999, I, §22.2.1, Ills 3, 4. For Moses of Nisibis, see Leroy 1974b.

³¹ Innemée/Van Rompay 2002, §16.

³² Leroy 1974a, 152.

³³ According to the data presented by Bishop Martyros in his paper at the Seventh International Congress of Coptic studies, Leiden, 28 August - 2 September 2000 (unpublished paper).

³⁴ Personal communication from Karel Innemée.

³⁵ Fiey 1972-1973, 326-327.

³⁶ Evelyn White 1932, 311-312.

³⁷ Evelyn White 1932, 312-321.

³⁸ Innemée/Van Rompay 1998, 191-193; Van Rompay/Schmidt 2001, 41-42, 53.

with central Mesopotamia. Shortly after the finishing of a second pair of folding doors between the nave and the *khurus* in A.D. 926/27 he travelled to Mesopotamia and North Syria from where he returned in 932 with 250 manuscripts in his luggage³⁹. This was more than just an enrichment of the library. The donors must have had good reasons to entrust them to the monks: they must have considered Deir al-Surian their own monastery, worthy of keeping these precious treasures.

To fit the stuccoes within this Mesopotamian connection, we have to turn again to Samarra, which was situated in between Baghdad and Takrit. The inhabitants of the three cities were practically neighbours and those who had moved to Egypt must have maintained close contacts with each other. Some were merchants, others had administrative duties, but in particular the arrival of Ibn Tulun from Samarra in 868 must have led to an influx of court functionaries and soldiers as well as architects, artists and craftsmen.

Several architectural elements of the mosque erected on Ibn Tulun's orders point to Samarra; Creswell described it as 'a foreign, Iraqi building planted down on the soil of Egypt'.⁴⁰ Cogently, the plasterwork was certainly not made by local workmen, but by stucco workers from Samarra. After accomplishing their task in Cairo these specialists very likely did not return, but successfully continued to exploit their expertise in Egypt, in particular in Fustat.

Apparently the Christians from Mesopotamia did what was in their power to strengthen the infrastructure of the monastery, not only by supporting its library, but also by financing building activities. The reference in the lintel inscription to 'every believer who has obtained a lot in this altar[room] and this holy monastery' is indicative of external support. Consequently, the possibility of the stuccoes being part of a *wagf* (pious donation) by Syrian benefactors, perhaps Takritans from Fustat, has to be considered seriously.

This hypothesis, tempting though it is, does not answer all questions. The time span of several decades between the making of the stuccoes in the mosque and those in the monastery makes it unlikely that both were produced by the same team of artists. The work in Deir al-Surian must have been executed by a next generation of stucco workers, perhaps under the direction of an experienced master, who had continued the tradition of their forerun-

ners in Egypt. The general concept demonstrates that at least some of them must have understood the decorative language of Christian buildings, not to speak of the possibility that they were Christians⁴¹.

A final matter is the reason why this, in the case of an Egyptian church building unconventional, decoration was chosen for this particular monastery. In the introduction the presence of decorative plasterwork in churches in Europe has been mentioned, but any direct European influence on the reliefs in Deir al-Surian is unlikely. While the affinity of Christian Egyptians with plaster reliefs seems to be negligible, at least at this scale and in such important places as altar rooms, the Syrians had their centuries-old tradition in decorating buildings with stuccoes. From this point of view the stuccoes in the monastery could be considered a typical Syrian item in an Egyptian Christian environment; obviously the Takritan monks of the monastery made themselves at home. The coincident availability of stucco workers from their homeland might have been helpful to realize this intention. Eventually the presence of these specialists led to cultural interaction, as the fragment in Deir Abu Maqar demonstrates that Copts were also sensible for the charm of their craftsmanship.

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³⁹ Blanchard 1995; Fiey 1972-1973, 340-341; Innemée/Van Rompay 1998, 187-188; Leroy 1974a, 152-153; Monneret de Villard 1928, 29.

⁴⁰ Creswell/Allan 1989, 406; see also Ettinghausen/Grabar 1987, 92-94.

⁴¹ Later written sources state that the architect of the Mosque of Ibn Tulun was also a Christian (Creswell/Allan 1989, 392, n. 4). Would this indeed be the case, this person might have been a Mesopotamian rather than an Egyptian.

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Pl. 1. Haykal of the Church of al-Adra, Deir al-Surian (photograph author)



Pl. 2. North wall of the haykal; upper zone (photograph author)



Pl. 3. East wall; central panel of the upper zone (photograph author)



Pl. 4. East wall; right part of the upper zone (photograph author)



Pl. 5. East wall; central niche (photograph author)



Pl. 6. Detail of Pl. 5 (photograph author)



Pl. 7. North wall; upper zone (photograph author)



Pl. 8. South wall; upper zone seen from a higher level (photograph author)



Pl. 9. East wall; haykal of the Chapel of the Forty-nine Martyrs (photograph author)



Pl. 10. Stucco framework of the arcade; Mosque of Ibn Tulun (photograph author)



Pl. 11. Stucco fragment; haykal of St Macarius, Deir Abu Maqar (photograph author)



Pl. 12. Pedestal with an angel; haykal of the Church of al-Adra, Deir al-Surian (photograph author)

A Feast of the Archangel Michael? A New Interpretation of a Mural Painting from Old Dongola

Magdalena ŁAPTAS

INTRODUCTION

In 2004, while excavating the southwestern Annex of the monastery on Kom H in Old Dongola, Sudan, the Polish archaeological mission working under the direction of Stefan Jakobielski discovered some very interesting murals. Among them there are two scenes found in Rooms 5 and 6 of the southwestern Annex of the monastery, which the explorers date to the twelfth century¹.

The first representation was found on the north wall of Room 5, and consists of two parts (Pl. 1). To the right the figure of the Virgin is represented, surrounded by a rectangular painted frame. The Virgin holds Christ in her left arm. Her head is slightly bent to her right, and she turns her eyes towards the scene that takes place on her right-hand side, which depicts dancing men who play instruments. They wear ample trousers and belted tunics. Some of them have zoomorphic masks on their faces; others have scarves around their heads (Pl. 2). Małgorzata Martens-Czarnecka suggests that this part of the composition derives from local folklore², and points out that the scene presumably depicts a feast of the Virgin³. Since the inscriptions in the Old Nubian language that accompany the representation have not been interpreted yet, this unique representation is still awaiting further study.

The second scene, being the subject of this study, was found on the south wall of Room 6, and has a layout similar to the previous one (Pl. 3). To the right the huge figure of a standing archangel is painted. The archangel holds a sphere in his left hand and a sceptre with a spike pointing downwards in his right. A sword hanging over his back is fastened with two straps which cross his chest. Near the right wing of the archangel a series of small scenes are shown. The first scene depicts two men sitting on a couch turned one to another, between curtains drawn aside (Pl. 4). The men busily talk to each other. The right figure holds a

moneybag in his left hand and with his right hand he passes some money to his company. A young man dressed only in a loincloth is seen standing behind the couch; he might be a servant assisting the two men.

To the left of this scene, opposite the archangel, we can see a corral enclosing a flock of sheep. Below, on the ground a sitting servant kills a sheep (Pl. 5). Above the corral, two figures in long, white robes are approaching a man who is sitting cross-legged on a pillow (Pl. 6). One of the persons is veiled, which may suggest that this figure is a woman. The sitting man rests his left hand on his hip and raises his right hand towards these persons. To the left, at the same level as the corral, a mounted man is approaching an archangel on horseback (Pl. 7). The sequence of the episodes is completed by the figure of a saint who is featured below the scene with the couch (Pl. 8). All that remains of him are his haloed head and parts of his hands raised in *orant* gesture. The saint is depicted frontally, and has the features of an elderly man, with sunken cheeks, a long grey beard and long hair combed with a knot on top of his head. There are several numerical cryptograms of the name of Archangel Michael painted on the vestment covering his left shoulder⁴. He is the second biggest figure in the whole scene after the archangel. It appears that the saint is linked with the representation of the two men sitting on the couch as the hair on top of his head almost reaches that image. Given the fact that he is the second most important person in the whole composition and his link with the scenes taking place above, one may suggest that this saint is the narrator of the events.

This mysterious image has drawn the attention of researchers from the moment it was found.

¹ Jakobielski 2006a, 30; Martens-Czarnecka 2006, 48, Fig. 22.

² Martens-Czarnecka 2005, 281.

Henryk Pietras interpreted it as a cycle of virtues and vices of monks⁵, whereas Jakobielski stated that this composition is 'possibly an allegory of the temptations lying in wait for a monk who is tied by his hair to a rock'⁶. During the 11th International Conference of Nubian Studies in Warsaw in 2006, Martens-Czarnecka presented an interpretation of this composition based on the Book of Tobias, in which Archangel Raphael is the guide of young Tobias⁷. The present paper aims at adding an alternative interpretation to the discussion, which is based on the striking analogies between the particular episodes of this cycle with the text of the Coptic *Encomium in Michaellem archangelum* attributed to Abba Theodosius, Archbishop of Alexandria⁸.

CHARACTERISTICS OF NUBIAN PAINTING

For a better understanding of the representation, we should first focus on two characteristics of Nubian church art. Firstly, Nubian painting, as is common in medieval art in general, follows the principles of the ideological hierarchy, meaning that the most important figure in a composition is the largest one. A good example of this principle is the Nativity scene from the Faras Cathedral, where the Virgin resting on a bed is much bigger than the surrounding figures (Pl. 9)⁹. Regarding the two previously described compositions from Rooms 5 and 6 of the Southwestern Annex, it is obvious that in the first case the Virgin is the most important figure, and from this viewpoint it is logical to link the scene beside her with her feast. In the second case, the archangel is the biggest figure in the composition, followed by the anonymous saint. Other figures are

just an add-on to these two most important ones. In line with the interpretation of the scene in Room 5, this image should represent the feast of the depicted archangel. This hypothesis seems to be supported by the fact that two other walls in the same room also show images of archangels.

This brings us to the second point, namely the special veneration of archangels in Nubia and their prominent presence in decoration programmes. They acted as intermediaries between God and mankind, protectors of the faithful and guardians of buildings, and also struggled against demons. The faithful who brought gifts at the days of the archangels' feasts and lit lamps in front of their pictures, could count on their help both during their life on earth as well as after death¹⁰. Unfortunately, no complete *synaxarion* from Nubia has been found yet, but one can presume that the feasts of archangels were widely celebrated¹¹.

A few instances will suffice to demonstrate the importance of the cult of archangels in Nubia. Among the inscriptions coming from the Nubian territories, a graffito on the southern wall of the *diakonikon* from the Church of the Archangel Raphael in Tamit has been preserved, which says that the Deacon Philotheos, the son of Marianta wrote this text on the occasion of the feast of Raphael on the third epagomenal day¹². A painting of Archangel Raphael spearing a beast that swallows a man, including a model of a small church near the archangel's left foot, was found in the south aisle of the same church¹³. The man coming out of the beast's mouth raises his hands upward in *orant* gesture. This is probably a symbolic depiction of Raphael's protection over human souls and at the same time over the church dedicated to him. The painting is placed in a small niche, which differentiates it from other representations found in the church. Perhaps this is the kind of picture to which the faithful prayed during the archangel's feast asking him for protection.

The most important of the archangels in Nubia was Michael, the commander of the heavenly host (*archistrategos*). In some regions of Egypt he was celebrated on the twelfth day of each month¹⁴. The main feast was dedicated to the installation of the archangel in heaven after the expulsion of Mastēma, the fallen angel, and was celebrated in November (12th *Athôr*). The faithful who on that day would burn incense or light oil lamps and pray to Michael could count on his special protection and help on

³ Martens-Czarnecka 2006, 46.

⁴ Müller 2001, 323.

⁵ This interpretation was presented during the *Symposium on the Culture of the Late Antiquity and Early Christianity* in Kazimierz Dolny in 2004.

⁶ Jakobielski 2006a, 31.

⁷ Martens-Czarnecka, forthcoming.

⁸ Geerard 1979, 353-354, no. 7152.

⁹ Łaptaś 2003; Michałowski 1967, 143-147, Figs 64-65.

¹⁰ Łaptaś, forthcoming.

¹¹ I have raised this issue during my speech at the 11th Polish Nubian Conference in Gdańsk and Gnień in 2004, however, this presentation has not been published.

¹² Donadoni 1967, 67; Łajtar/van der Vliet 1998, 45.

¹³ Baldassare 1967, 51-52, Fig. 18.

¹⁴ Cf. Papaconstantinou 2001, 158-159; Zanetti 1994, 347.

the day of the Last Judgement¹⁵. That this feast was known in Nubia is demonstrated not only from the preserved fragments of *Liber Institutionis Michaelis* in Old-Nubian and Greek versions¹⁶, but also by a wall painting found in Room 13 of the north-western Annex of the monastery in Old Dongola (Pl. 10)¹⁷. The eastern wall of that room contains a monumental image of the standing figure of Archangel Michael. He wears a ceremonial dress, a *loros* and a crown on the top of his head. Three figures, each with a cross nimbus and therefore identified as the Holy Trinity, appear from behind his head, touching his crown. The crowning by the Holy Trinity surely symbolizes the installation of Archangel Michael after the defeat of Mastēma¹⁸. The same room contains several more images of archangels, including a cycle connected with Balaam, which was found on the north wall¹⁹. In one of the scenes Balaam kneels in front of the archangel. This scene corresponds to the revelation of the archangel that according to the Ethiopian *synaxarion* was celebrated in March (12th *Mâgâbit*)²⁰.

Another feast connected with Archangel Michael was related to the celebration of the saving of the Three Youths in the Fiery Furnace²¹, celebrated in December (12th *Tâkshâsh*)²². The scene of the Three Youths in the Fiery Furnace was often represented on the walls of Nubian churches, for example in the cathedral of Faras (three times)²³. Two suchlike scenes and fragments of a third have also been found in the monastery of Old Dongola²⁴. As appears from the soot that covers some paintings of archangels in Room 9 of the church in Baganarti, lamps were burnt in front of these pictures; several of such lamps were found in the structural debris. Some fragments of three archangels were found on the walls of this room, which was perhaps a chapel dedicated to them²⁵.

THE STORY OF DOROTHEOS AND THEOPISTE

Returning to the representation in Room 6 in the southwestern Annex on Kom H in Old Dongola, the most often discussed episode out of the composition is the conversation between the two men sitting on the couch. It is usually labelled as a 'commercial transaction'. However, it seems that two other episodes can be used as the key to understand the meaning of the whole image: the servant killing a sheep, and the meeting between the rider and the mounted archangel.

A plausible solution is to link these two scenes with a story from the aforementioned encomium attributed to Abba Theodosius, which was created at the occasion of the feast of Archangel Michael on the 12th *Athôr*²⁶. This encomium exists in Sahidic Coptic, Bohairic Coptic and Arabic versions²⁷. The text recounts an event that happened to a certain pious couple, Dorotheos and his wife Theopiste²⁸. They were rich people who always celebrated the feast of Archangel Michael on the twelfth day of each month. Unfortunately, one day, luck turned away from them as many of their cattle perished. This misfortune lasted for two years and in the end the couple was left with only one sheep, which they decided to devote to Archangel Michael. The next month, when another feast of Archangel Michael was approaching, the couple had nothing left but their clothes. They decided to sell a garment of Theopiste to buy a sheep. The shepherd, however, didn't want to buy this garment. On his way back home, Dorotheos met Archangel Michael, who was riding a white horse and had taken the appearance of a chief imperial nobleman. The archangel asked Dorotheos where he was going and why he was carrying his wife's robes. After Dorotheos had explained the situation, Michael asked him whether he would accept a guest in his house if he would bring a sheep with him. Dorotheos gladly agreed to this proposal and Michael sent one of the angels who were with him to get the sheep. Then the archangel asked Dorotheos to get fish as he explained that he did not

¹⁵ Cf. Müller 1959, 15.

¹⁶ Published in Plumley/Browne 1988, no. 11, 48-51; Browne 1988; *idem* 1990; *idem* 1996.

¹⁷ Martens-Czarnecka 2001, 264.

¹⁸ Van der Helm 1990, 486.

¹⁹ Martens-Czarnecka 2001, 272.

²⁰ Wallis Budge 1928, III, 689. The Nubian used the Egyptian calendar (van der Vliet 2003, 211-212). Some Ethiopian feasts corresponded to the Coptic ones, however the names of months are different (Zanetti 1994, 347, n. 83).

²¹ In Nubian painting, the savior of the Three Youths was identified as Archangel Michael. Cf. Łaptaś/Jakobielski 2001, 76, n. 5; Michałowski 1967, 138-140, Figs 60-61.

²² Wallis Budge 1928, II, 365.

²³ Łaptaś/Jakobielski 2001, 75.

²⁴ Martens-Czarnecka 2001, 265.

²⁵ Łaptaś 2004.

²⁶ Cf. 'The Encomium by Abba Theodosius, Archbishop of Alexandria', in Wallis Budge 1894, 1-59, and *idem* 1915, 321-431 (Sahidic version); 893-947 (transl.).

²⁷ Müller 1959, 162-163.

²⁸ Wallis Budge 1915, 919-935.

eat sheep. When Dorotheos came back home Theopiste informed him that the servant who was sent to the cellar found seven jars filled with oil. When Dorotheos and Theopiste entered the bedroom, they discovered a chest filled with splendid apparels. Realizing that a miracle had happened, they dressed in festive attire and went to church to pray to the archangel. After thankful prayers, they returned home and expected the nobleman. When Michael arrived at their house with his heavenly companions, Dorotheos and Theopiste greeted him cheerfully and declared their happiness on the celebration of the feast of Archangel Michael. So the archangel asked Dorotheos to bring him the fish, which he ordered to be cut in two. When the host did that, he saw a sealed bundle inside. Michael ordered Dorotheos to open it. The bundle turned out to be filled with golden coins. Next, Archangel Michael called the couple and explained that since they were pious and hospitable and took the effort to host him, God repaid them with money. Dorotheos and Theopiste fell to their knees. So the archangel explained to them that he had visited them every month. As the couple wanted him to explain who he was, he revealed his true identity, and listed the functions he held at the heavenly court and deeds that he made in the name of God.

It seems that the scene shown in Room 6 corresponds with the succeeding sequences of episodes of the story of Dorotheos and Theopiste. The sequence may start from the upper left corner when Dorotheos, coming back from the shepherd, meets the archangel mounted on a white horse (Pl. 7). Then Dorotheos and Theopiste talk to their guest, the nobleman who in fact is Archangel Michael (Pl. 6), whereas the servant depicted below kills a sheep (Pl. 5). Finally, the miracle happens; Dorotheos who sits on the couch with his guest discovers the sealed bundle full of golden coins (Pl. 4). The attending servant is a very characteristic figure in that scene

as he is an eyewitness who can testify that the miracle had happened.

The main problem in the interpretation of the scene is the identification of the elderly saint who is represented at the bottom of the composition (Pl. 9). As mentioned above, Jakobielski suggested that this is 'a monk tied by his hair to a rock'²⁹. It makes, however, more sense to suppose that his hair just overlaps the scene shown above. Suchlike compositions can also be found in other Nubian paintings, e.g. in Chapel XX of the Upper Church in Baganarti. Here, the crown of a depicted ruler was painted against the background with a leg in a stirrup of a horseman³⁰. Both representations are applied on the same layer of plaster, and judging from the stylistic features one can assume that they are contemporary.

In case of the mural from Old Dongola, it seems that by overlapping of the two images, the painter had the intention to underline the relation between the saint and the scenes that took place above. One may suggest that the saint is the narrator who tells the story and prays to Archangel Michael, or simply the supposed author of the encomium himself: St Theodosius³¹, whose relationship with Nubia is ascertained by the consecration of Longinus, a missionary to Nubia³². In the introduction to the Bohairic version of the encomium the patriarch is described as 'the mighty in all blessings, the most holy and blessed man, the man filled with the Holy Spirit, and perfect in all virtues, Abba Theodosius, the son of the Apostolic Fathers, and friend of angels, the Archbishop of the city of Alexandria'³³. It should, however, be noticed that present-day scholars call Theodosius' authorship of the encomium in question³⁴.

CONCLUSION

Although several questions remain unanswered, for example the absence of any fish in the scene of the men on the couch, one can assume that the mural in Room 6 of the monastery on Kom H in Old Dongola illustrates the story of Dorotheos and Theopiste. It is, however, impossible to determine whether the painting represents a creative interpretation of the encomium text or had been inspired from some other text recounting this event. In theory, the Nubian painters could have used a manuscript containing the text of the encomium and miniatures corresponding to particular episodes of

²⁹ Jakobielski 2008, 297. This interpretation seems to contradict Jakobielski's second conclusion that this part of the monastery could have been a woman's section of *xenodocheion*. If so, a temptation of a nun would be more appropriate here than that of a monk.

³⁰ Łaptas 2004, 249, Fig. 5.

³¹ Davis 2004, 101-107.

³² Hardy 1991.

³³ Wallis Budge 1894, 1.

³⁴ For doubts about the authorship of Theodosius, see Orlandi 1971, 179-180

the event. This would explain why the composition consists of a cycle of minor scenes. Be that as it may, the wall painting under discussion seems to be the only image of the story of Dorotheos and Theopiste that has come down to us; it perfectly illustrates the coherence between church decoration and the cult of archangels. Moreover, together with the scene of the Investiture of Archangel Michael in Room 13, this mural also demonstrates that Coptic texts devoted to Michael were sources of inspiration for the embellishment of Nubian churches.

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Pl. 1. Celebration of a feast of the Virgin; Room 5, southwestern Annex of the monastery on Kom H, Old Dongola (photograph T. Jakobielski)



Pl. 2. Two dancing men; detail of Pl. 1 (photograph T. Jakobielski)



Pl. 3. The Feast of Archangel Michael(?); Room 6, southwestern Annex of the monastery on Kom H, Old Dongola (photograph T. Jakobielski)



Pl. 4. The scene of the miracle(?); detail of Pl. 3 (photograph H. Pietras)



*Pl. 5. A servant killing the sheep; detail of Pl. 3
(photograph H. Pietras)*



Pl. 6. Two figures approaching a seated man; detail of Pl. 3 (photograph H. Pietras)



*Pl. 7. Meeting of a horsemen and the archangel riding a horse; detail of Pl. 3
(photograph H. Pietras)*



Pl. 8. St Theodosius (?); detail of Pl. 3 (photograph H. Pietras)



Pl. 9. Nativity; Cathedral of Faras (after Michałowski 1967, Pls 64, 65)



Pl. 10. The investiture of Archangel Michael; Room 13, northwestern Annex of the monastery on Kom H, Old Dongola (photograph T. Jakobielski)

Panels and Rosettes: The Metal Doors in the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus and Their Source of Inspiration

Luitgard MOLS*

In the next place we went to see the church of St. John the Baptist, now converted into a mosque¹, and held too sacred for Christians to enter, or almost to look into. However we had three short views of it, looking in at three several gates. Its gates are vastly large, and cover'd with brass, stamp'd all over with Arab characters, and in several places with the figure of a chalice, suppos'd to be the ancient sign or arms of the Mamelukes (Pl. 1)².

This vivid description of the metalwork doors in the Umayyad Mosque of Damascus, erected between 87-96 A.H./705-715 A.D., was given by Henry Maundrell who visited the city on his journey from Aleppo to Jerusalem in 1697³. It came some 34 years after the western traveller Thévenot had displayed his appreciation of the same doors (Pl. 2)⁴. They were not the first western travellers to point to metalwork objects in Damascus of beautiful make. Others had already expressed their admiration for the highly developed craft of metalworking in the second capital of the Mamluk Empire in Mamluk times (1250-1517), such as Simone Sigoli's ventured esteem of the Damascene craftsmen mastering the technique of the inlaying of basins and pitchers with gold and silver in 1384 and Bertrandon de la Brocquière's praise for the manufacture of damascened burnished blades in 1432⁵. According to some travellers the high technical perfection of the workmanship was caused by the hereditary organisation of the crafts in medieval Damascus, in which knowledge and expertise was passed on from generation to generation⁶. Others were clearly impressed by the bazaars and the number of skilled and specialised metalworkers working in them⁷.

In contrast to the city's renown for the metalworking craft in Mamluk times, extant religious buildings in Damascus originating in the Mamluk period remain curiously devoid of metalwork objects that can still with certainty be attributed to

this period⁸. Today we have evidence of only seven decorated metalwork doors, each of late Mamluk or

* The author would like to thank Mat Immerzeel for his valuable comments and references.

¹ The mosque referred to is the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus. It was built on the site where the Church of St John was located, which before had been occupied by the Roman Temple of Jupiter. For an overview of the various religious buildings previously constructed on the site of the Umayyad Mosque in the heart of the bustling commercial area of Damascus, see Creswell/Allan 1989, 46-51.

² Maundrell 1963, 169.

³ For a comprehensive analysis of the construction of the Umayyad Mosque, see Creswell/Allan 1989, 46-72.

⁴ In 1663, Thévenot made the following observation: 'En face de cette cour est le portail de la mosquée, dans laquelle on entre par douze belles grandes portes de cuivre figurées en bosse avec plusieurs colonnes, la plupart de porphyre, dont les chapiteaux sont dorez.' (Thévenot 1663, 463). His reference is more detailed than the general remark by the early sixteenth-century traveller Ludivico di Varthema, who merely refers to them as 'four principal doors of metal'. For the latter remark, see Badger 1863, 12.

⁵ For Sigoli's remark on the inlaying technique, see Bellowini *et al.* 1948, 182. For Brocquière's praise for the technique of burnishing blades in Damascus, see Wright 1848, 304.

⁶ This was expressed by the travellers Frescobaldi and Sigoli who visited Damascus in 1384. For their remarks, see Bellowini *et al.* 1948, 86, 182.

⁷ Poggibonsi 1945, 77, travelling to Damascus on his journey between 1346 and 1350, mentioned a staggering number of metalworkers active in the city of Damascus, i.e. 70.000 goldsmiths and money changers who worked in gold and silver, and 24.000 craftsmen working in copper. On the presence of master craftsmen working in base and precious metals in Damascus in between 1400 and 1401 as reported by B. de Mignanelli in his *Vita Tamerlani*, see Fischel 1956, 226. That the industry was still thriving in the late fifteenth century is suggested by the traveller Meshullam ben R. Menahem who mentions the existence of four large bazaars in Damascus, one of which specialised in goods of brass inlaid with gold and silver. For the latter, see Adler 1930, 199.

⁸ Partly, this lack can be accounted for by the loss of a large number of buildings that were erected in Damascus in the Mamluk period. Meinecke 1992, II, p. VII, lists a total of 163 newly built public and religious constructions in this period of which now only 57 remain. None of these decorated metalwork housedoors come from the Mamluk period.

early Ottoman make. They are part of the group of embossed doors that Maundrell and Thévenot referred to in their writings and that were made for the Umayyad Mosque to replace older specimens. Six of them still remain in their original location, and all of them are of a design that is characterized by its subdivision into panels, hence the name panelled type⁹. Within Damascus they are the only embellished Mamluk metalwork doors that still survive in the context for which they were originally made. It is remarkable that these doors are not related in design or make to what was fashionable for Mamluk metalwork doors in Cairo, Jerusalem, or Aleppo in the same period. The question arises why the patrons chose a unique type of metalwork doors exclusive to this building and what the reasons would have been for their implementation? Were they modelled upon known Islamic forerunners executed in materials other than metal or was inspiration found in earlier Byzantine prototypes?

The panelled doors that are still extant were installed in the exterior walls of the mosque between 1405 and 1527, at times when older specimens had to be replaced owing to fires or civil unrest¹⁰. Today, the remaining metalwork doors are installed in three walls only: two smaller ones (Pls 3, 4) flanking a huge door (Pl. 5) in the west wall, two small ones (Pls 6, 7) in the east wall flanking a renewed wooden door that before the fire of 1893 was still covered with bronze (Pl. 8)¹¹, while one metal plaited door still remains in the north wall (Pl. 9). The impact on the viewer differs markedly: those in the west wall display a robustness that the other extant ones do not, a robustness that is evidently linked to the thickness of the metalwork used on these doors¹².

The bronze plaques on the wooden supports in the north and east wall give the impression to be much more feeble and thinner. This discrepancy cannot be explained by the time frame in which the two sets of doors were manufactured, for the pairs of smaller doors in both the east and the west wall were manufactured in the second decade of the fifteenth century, only a year apart.

Irrespective of the anomaly in the use of metal, these seven doors share a number of communalities¹³. All of them have a wooden support onto which bronze plaques, either flat or embossed, are nailed that cover the entire surface. Both casting and hammering in *repoussé* were used for the relief plaques, casting being preferred for those decorative motifs that were needed in larger quantities such as the rosettes (Pl. 10) or for the names of the patrons that were repeated on a single door. Unique inscriptions such as a Quranic verse or a dedicatory text with a date (Pl. 11) were executed in the hammering technique.

All the rectangular doors are composed of two leaves, each leaf being subdivided into slightly recessed rectangular or square panels placed one above the other, their number varying from three to five. On some of these doors panels of identical shape and size were placed below each other (see Pl. 9) while on others a more varied division was created by alternating rectangular panels with oblong bands (see Pl. 8 especially). Irrespective of this subdivision, a symmetrical arrangement was aspired on each of these doors.

The panels on the majority of the doors are internally subdivided into smaller compartments, distributed either in horizontal registers (Pl. 12) or in crosswise sections with a strong centrifugal focus (Pl. 13). Irrespective of the interior subdivision, the main decorative repertoire is made up of epigraphy, blazons and rosette-like protrusions that come in a variety of shapes, their petals spiked, round or whirling. Flat and undecorated sheets fill the gaps between the ornamental ones. These plain sheets serve simultaneously as a kind of background from which the other plaques stand out in relief. Only two doors, namely the small doors flanking the portal in the west wall, differ in this respect from the others in that their panels are adorned with one ornament only, so that a further subdivision of the field is absent (Pl. 14).

Inscriptions form an important part of the decorative repertoire on these doors. Their conspicu-

⁹ An appendix comprising statements from medieval Arabic sources concerning these doors in the pre-Mamluk and Mamluk period can be found below.

¹⁰ Nú'aymī 1951, II, 403-404, translated by Sauvaire 1896, 219-220.

¹¹ Of this door only a few plaques remain, which are recorded in a guidebook to the National Museum of Damascus by Hasanī 1930, 64-68.

¹² This contradicts the observation by Allan (1984, 88-89), who observed a general meanness to the use of metalwork on these doors that could indicate a scarcity of money or metal, or both.

¹³ For a more comprehensive exposé on the communalities between these seven doors, see Mols 2006, 51-54. For a description and analysis of each individual door, see Mols 2006, 246-256, 324-327.

ous position on these doors, either serving as the sole ornament on a panel, or centrally positioned in roundels or oblong panels illustrates the importance given to this type of ornament. The content most favoured by the makers was patronage and religion. The texts differentiate between the person actually responsible for the door, usually the vizier who is introduced by the phrases ‘on the order of’ or ‘under the supervision of whom’, and the sultan during whose reign the door was made, and who provided, among others, the financial means for the restoration of these doors¹⁴. On most doors, simple references to God, sometimes in combination with Quranic verses, are alternated with the name of the patron. The former are always positioned in panels that are situated higher up than those containing the name of the patron. By positioning God above man, a clear hierarchical effect was achieved. Twice Quran 15:46, reading ‘Enter ye into them in peace and security’ preceded by the *bismillah*, occurs. It refers to Paradise, which metaphorically not only connects these actual doors to those of Paradise, but also suggests a connection between the sacred space of this particular mosque and Paradise. Although quite popular on doorways of religious buildings in Mamluk Cairo, this particular verse was seldom found on Mamluk metalwork doors¹⁵.

Until now, the installation of seven doors of the panelled type in the Umayyad Mosque has almost been taken for granted. It is, however, important to realize that they are an anomaly among extant types of Mamluk metalwork doors and that they are found only in the Umayyad Mosque. For already in the fourteenth century, three other door-types had been developed most specimens of which still remain in religious buildings in Cairo. Besides a type featuring a wooden support decorated with oblong metal bands, either filled with epigraphy or devoid of them, we find two other, more ornately decorated types, namely the overall star pattern door and the medallion door. The overall star pattern type was characterised by a central rectangular field filled with closely entangled star patterns while an oblong band often filled with dedicatory inscriptions was located above and below this field (Pl. 15). The main features of the latter type were a central rectangular field with a large medallion in the centre surrounded by four corner-pieces (Pl. 16). Again, epigraphic oblong bands were positioned near the top and base of such doors. The aesthetic of these two latter types was regulated by the strong

centralized focus of the design and the clear subdivision of the field in geometric and floral designs versus epigraphic ornament.

What could have stimulated the introduction of a new type within the confines of the Umayyad Mosque instead of choosing an already established metalwork door design? A possible answer might be that the craftsmen in Damascus were not familiar with the overall star pattern type or the medallion type, which were popular in the Mamluk capital Cairo, and therefore took refuge to another design. This seems, however, unlikely for both surviving objects and comments in the literary sources indicate that the repertoire of fittings in Mamluk Damascus was indeed more varied than what is actually found *in situ* today. Firstly, metalworkers in Damascus must have been familiar with metalwork doors of the overall star pattern type for the oldest surviving specimen is actually installed in a building in Damascus. This fitting is located at the entrance of the *bīmāristān* (549/1154) of Nūr al-Dīn b. Zengī, which is accessible to all and which lies in close vicinity of the Umayyad Mosque (Pl. 17). Secondly, the overall star pattern door in the Mamluk *bīmāristān* of Arghūn al-Kāmilī in Aleppo, dated 755/1354-1355, actually shows that this type was manufactured not only in Cairo, but also in fourteenth-century Aleppo (Pl. 18)¹⁶. It seems therefore probable that the type was also known in Damascus at the time. Besides this, there is evidence that at least one overall star pattern door was manufactured in Damascus in the fourteenth

¹⁴ According to Ibn al-Himsī 1999, 252, 255 (translated by Behrens-Abouseif 2004, 293-294) the costs required for the restoration of the mosque during the reign of Sultan Qāytbāy (1468-1496) were shared: a sum was allocated by the sultan in addition to which money was collected from the merchants and other sponsors. The fifteenth-century author explicitly states, however, that the doors were paid for by the sultan himself.

¹⁵ Cruikshank Dodd/Khairallah 1981, II, 66-67 list ten occurrences of this particular verse located on doorways in late Ayyubid and Mamluk Cairo. With respect to metalwork doors in Damascus, this verse is present on two metalwork doors in the Umayyad Mosque, i.e. on the door positioned in the north wall and another on the northern side in the east wall of the Umayyad Mosque. With respect to metalwork doors in Cairo, this verse is found only on the Mamluk metalwork entrance door of the *madrasa* and mausoleum of Amir Mahmūd al-Ustādār (797/1394-1395) in the said city (Mols 2006, 72, 241-243).

¹⁶ For a description of this door, see Mols 2006, 210-211, Pls 46-48.

century for the city-name of Damascus appears on a radial inscription on a doorknocker that is attached to an overall star pattern door (Pl. 19): it not only explicitly states that the door was manufactured in Damascus but it also includes the year of manufacture, 761/1360¹⁷. This door was ordered to be installed in the *qibla*-wall of the *madrassa* of Sultan Hasan in Cairo. It is a highly unusual fitting for its lavish use of precious inlay. As the door and the doorknocker form a unity insofar as technique, material, and decorative motifs are concerned, it provides evidence that the overall star pattern door was a known type in Damascus. Finally, evidence of a more varied picture of types of doors present and manufactured in Damascus in the fourteenth and early fifteenth century is presented by a shipwreck off the Megadim coast in Israel¹⁸. This contained component parts of metal facings associated with the doors of the overall star pattern and medallion types. The shipment can be dated 807/1404 as it also contained coins, the latest of which was struck in the given year.

How do we explain the absence of Mamluk metalwork doors in Damascus except for those that are installed in the Umayyad Mosque, let alone the dearth in physical evidence of different types of metalwork doors extant in Mamluk buildings in Damascus? Firstly fires took their fair toll, causing the disappearance of both buildings and their fittings. A fourteenth-century Damascene sheikh recalled that the fire that burnt the mosques of Tankiz and Yalbūghā caused 'its marble and copper to become cracked and fissured like the folds of liver'¹⁹. Also the markets where metalwork objects were manufactured were not spared the devastating effects of fires, resulting in the loss of life and the

impoverishment of the craftsmen²⁰. According to an eyewitness account, the removal of fittings such as doors was also the result of plundering following the attacks and seizure of the city by the Mongols²¹. Internal upheavals and strife were also directed specifically towards the houses owned by amirs who had fallen out of grace. One such event shows the meticulous stripping of buildings, even including metalwork nails: 'They pulled the lattices off doors, took nails from the ceiling and the woodwork'²². According to an account by the fourteenth-century historian Ibn Sasrā, the severe loss of metalwork fittings in Damascus in the Mamluk period was also state-orchestrated. The chronicler tells of the removal of numerous types of metalwork objects from Damascus in 775/1374 on the order of the viceroy of Damascus, to meet the wishes of Sultan al-Ashraf Sha'bān who intended to facilitate his building projects in Cairo with these spoils.

In Damascus, meanwhile, Baydamur [viceroy of Damascus] had neglected the welfare of the people and was busy taking their possessions. Sultan al-Malik al-Ashraf demanded of him whatever was needed for his building activity [i.e. the sultan's madrasa] in Cairo; such as window grilles, doors, sheets, metal rings, and other things which were needed for building. [...] The craftsmen worked in the viceregal palace for a period until the work was completed and then they exhibited it to Baydamur. One who supervised them in the viceregal palace told me that they assembled the work and exhibited to Baydamur whatever was of gold and silver, nothing else, [objects] such as sheets, rings, nails, corner-pieces²³, rings, door latches, hinges, locks, and crescents for the top of domes. They assembled all of this and weighed it. It was in excess of twelve qintārs [ca 2,220 kg] of gold and silver, nothing else. This is aside from the inlaid copper and whatever was on wood. He sent it all to Cairo on the backs of a hundred and sixty camels²⁴.

These different types of literary evidence explain the general dearth in extant metalwork fittings from the Mamluk period in Damascus. The preservation of the doors in the Umayyad Mosque is, in all probability, linked to the mosque's prestige and the combined effort of the sultan and the vizier to provide the necessary means for the upkeep of the venerated place. This does not, however, explain the choice of the Mamluk patrons or the metalworkers involved

¹⁷ For a description of both the door and the doorknocker and their inscriptions, see Mols 2006, 214-217.

¹⁸ Misch-Brandl 1985, 17, Pls 34, 38.

¹⁹ Shaykh 'Alā' al-Dīn b. Aybak, quoted by Ibn Sasrā 1963, I, 118 and II, 84.

²⁰ Ibn Sasrā 1963, I, 155, 158 and II, 117-118.

²¹ The plundering of the al-Sālihiyya quarter and the removal of the doors during the attack by the Mongol Ghazān in 699-700/1299-1300 was recorded by the historian and theologian al-Dhahabī (673-748 (or 753)/1274-1348 (or 1352-53); see Somogyi 1948, 369.

²² Ibn Sasrā 1963, I, 23 and II, 13.

²³ The term (*zawāyā*), used here for corner-pieces, literally means 'angles'.

²⁴ Ibn Sasrā 1963, I, 249-250 and II, 187-188.



Pl. 1. Detail of inscriptions and blazon on the northern side door in the east wall of the Umayyad Mosque (author)



Pl. 2. Overview of the three metalwork doors in the west wall of the Umayyad Mosque (author)



Pl. 3. The northern side door in the west wall (author)



Pl. 4. The southern side door in the west wall (author)



Pl. 5. The central door in the west wall (author)



Pl. 6. The northern side door in the east wall (author)



Pl. 7. The southern side door in the east wall (author)



Pl. 8. The central door, now lost, in the east wall (After Migeon 1907, PL. 194)



Pl. 9. The right leaf of the metalwork door in the north wall (author)



Pl.10. Cast rosettes on the central door in the west wall



Pl. 11. The patron's name and the date (in abjad) on the central door in the west wall (author)



Pl. 12. The distribution in horizontal registers on the northern side door in the west wall (author)



Pl. 13. The crosswise subdivision of the central panel on the door in the north wall (author)



Pl. 14. A single inscription as ornament on the southern side door in the west wall (author)



Pl. 15. The overall star pattern door in the entrance of the madrasa and khānqāh of Sultan Barqūq (786-88/1384-86) in Cairo (author)



Pl. 16. The medallion door in the courtyard of the madrasa and khānqāh of Sultan Barqūq (786-88/1384-86) in Cairo (author)



Pl. 17. The overall star pattern door in the bīmāristān of Nūr al-Dīn b. Zengī (549/1154) in Damascus (author)



Pl. 18. The overall star pattern door in the bīmāristān of Arghūn al-Kāmilī (755/1354-55) in Aleppo (author)



Pl. 19. The doorknocker (761/1360) on the qibla-door in the madrasa of Sultan Hasan in Cairo (author)



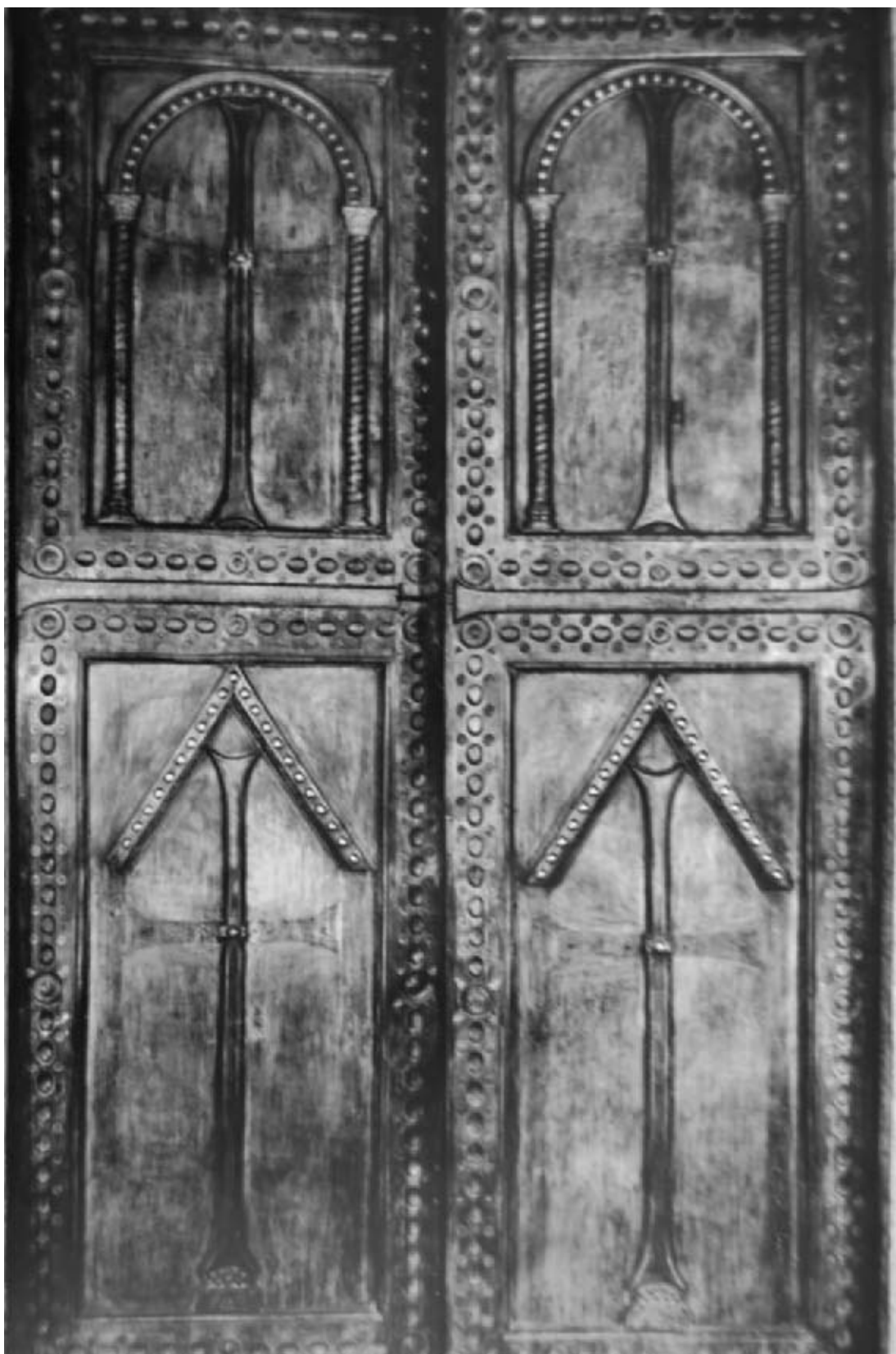
Pl. 20. The entrance gate, dated 608/1211-12, to the Citadel of Aleppo (author)



Pl. 21. The woodwork panelled door in Dayr Mār Elyān near the village of Qaryatayn (after Stern 1954, Pl. 1)



*Pl. 22. The panelled reverse of the entrance door in the bīmāristān of Nūr al-Dīn b. Zengi (549/1154) in Damascus
(author)*



Pl. 23. Panelled door at the entrance of the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul (after English Farmer 1973, Pl. 16)



Pl. 24. Protruding bosses and rosettes on the eleventh-century panelled door in the monastery of the Grand Lavra at Mount Athos (after English Farmer 1973, Pl. 14)



*Pl. 25. The Byzantine door of the Church of al-Qālīs, installed in the qibla-wall of the Great Mosque of Sana'a
(after Serjeant/Lewcock 1983, Pl. 18.34)*

to install a unique type of metalwork door in the Umayyad Mosque. The following question arises: What could possibly have been the source of inspiration for this novel design?

Inspiration might have been found in three possible models: the metalwork doors in the Citadel of Aleppo, wooden doors of the panelled type found in various religious buildings and finally Byzantine doors executed in metalwork. Let us turn to the first possible model, the three huge entrance doors in the Citadel of Aleppo that were executed between 606-608/1209-1212 (Pl. 20)²⁵. Their material consists entirely of thick iron, which was evidently chosen for its defensive qualities instead of the woodwork support covered with bronze plaques used for the doors in the Umayyad Mosque. Their leaves are divided up into 65 or 70 rectangular even-sized panels of small size, each of which is decorated with a horseshoe design in which a pointed lance-form is placed. To this, a short foundation inscription is added on two doors. The rhythmic repetition of numerous small panels, their material, make and decoration show that they have little in common with the varied decorative motifs that are characteristic of the doors in the Umayyad Mosque. It therefore seems unlikely that they might have served as a source of inspiration for the latter doors.

If not the panelled doors in Aleppo, then perhaps the tradition of panelled doors executed in woodwork installed in churches and Islamic buildings in Syria might have provided the metalworkers with a model? From the Umayyad period, a woodwork-panelled door is extant in Dayr Mār Elyān near the village of Qaryatayn (Pl. 21)²⁶. There, three sets of square panels alternate with two sets of rectangular ones. The panels and the surrounding area are all filled with palmettes and vine scrolls. Another wooden panelled door, this time from the Zengid period, serves as the reverse of the metalwork entrance door in the *bīmāristān* (549/1154) of Nūr al-Dīn b. Zengī in Damascus (Pl. 22). There, its panels are filled with geometric star patterns whose units are in turn filled with foliate motifs. When these two doors are compared to the metalwork doors in the Umayyad Mosque it becomes clear that they follow a similar distribution of the panels over the field. In their distribution of the decoration, however, they differ. For in the case of the woodwork specimens, the panels are filled entirely with a continuous design of foliate or geometric motifs, an

aesthetic that is unlike the alternation of undecorated flat plaques with epigraphic and floral plaques in relief on the doors in the Umayyad Mosque. A direct influence, therefore, seems to be absent.

The third possible source of inspiration for the metalworkers in the Umayyad Mosque are the plaited panelled doors from Byzantine churches, the earliest extant examples being three doors still *in situ* in the Hagia Sophia (Pl. 23) in Istanbul²⁷. This type of Byzantine door was either cast in massive bronze or had a wooden support with sunken panels onto which bronze or brass sheets were nailed with large protruding bosses along the sides of the panels (Pl. 24). Some also contain ornamental rosettes within these panels²⁸. These characteristics, now, provide an overlap in material, make and decorative motifs with the metalwork doors in the Umayyad Mosque. Also in the symbolic message a correspondence between a number of doors belonging to both traditions is found, for they convey the symbolic message of Paradise gates²⁹. In a Byzantine context this is obvious through the depiction of saints, archangels and crosses, while in the case of two doors located in the north and east wall of the Umayyad Mosque this is expressed by the presence of verse 15:46, which refers to the repose of believers in Paradise. It should not, however, be forgotten, that according to some scholars the theme of

²⁵ For a description of these doors, see Mols 2006, 348-350.

²⁶ Stern 1954, 119-125, Pl. 1, Fig. 2; Catalogue Oldenburg 2008, no. 119 is the actual door from Dayr Mār Elyān, described by Stern.

²⁷ Two of these doors in the Hagia Sophia, datable to the sixth century, still adorn the Exonarthex and were formerly decorated with the cross in different stylizations. The latter were stripped of their explicit Christian connotations after 1453, but the outlines and imprints of the crosses are still visible (English Frazer 1973, Pls 15, 16). Much more elaborately decorated were the bronze doors of the Gate of the Horologium of the same complex, their plain recessed panels being decorated with monograms of the patrons surrounded by multiple borders of leafed scrolls and protruding bosses in a geometric setting. For examples within an early Christian context in Italy, see Mende/Hirmer 1983, 18, 21.

²⁸ For protruding bosses on the bronze doors installed at the Gate of the Horologium at Hagia Sophia, see Swift 1940, 248. For protruding bosses in combination with rosettes in the panels on the eleventh-century door of the monastery of the Grand Lavra at Mount Athos, see English Frazer 1973, Pl. 14.

²⁹ For an analysis of the symbolism of Byzantine church doors, see English Frazer 1973; Götz 1971, 9-30.

Paradise was already well developed within the Umayyad Mosque proper in the form of the vegetal and architectural themes that were executed in mosaic on the porticoes, the court façade and the sanctuary of the mosque³⁰. Inspiration in the choice for a verse referring to Paradise might therefore also have been found within the mosque itself.

Irrespective of the above-mentioned communalities, the makers of the doors of the Umayyad Mosque managed to implement an Islamic feel to the doors. Not only did they subdivide the panels internally into smaller decorative units in which relief work was alternated with flat undecorated plaques, instead of the single images that adorn the panels of Byzantine doors. But they also kept to the approved Islamic decorative repertoire, i.e. epigraphy and rosettes, instead of the figural images found on church doors.

Is it probable that in the first two decades of the fifteenth century the metalworkers responsible for the metalwork doors in the Umayyad Mosque

aspired to consciously revive the sixth-century doors installed in the Hagia Sophia (532-537) in Constantinople? This does not seem entirely far-fetched as it has been argued that in the first 100 years of Mamluk rule techniques associated with Byzantium, such as the use of glass mosaics and marble mosaics, were revived in buildings in Cairo and Damascus, instigated through political exchanges between the Mamluk and Byzantine courts³¹. This theory has, however, been refuted by Flood, who argued that, instead, the early Mamluks had no need to seek models far away, but instead found inspiration much closer at home, namely in the techniques and decorative repertoire of the marble vine frieze and the glass mosaic landscapes and architecture that adorned the walls of the Umayyad Mosque from the early eighth century on³².

In corroboration with the latter argument it seems more likely that the Mamluk metalworkers who chose to install a type of metalwork door that fell outside the scope of popular door types in the first 150 years of Mamluk rule were inspired by earlier, perhaps even Byzantine-based models that were depicted or incorporated within the precinct of the mosque. No conclusive evidence has hitherto been found in the literary sources that proves that already in early Islamic times the mosque housed doors of the panelled type. What we do gather from several sources is that metalwork doors were already part of the mosque in pre-Mamluk times. According to the tenth-century geographer al-Muqaddasī the three doors situated in the west wall were all covered with gilded brass³³. The same author also mentions several plaited doors between the palace of the sultan adjacent to the mosque and the *maqsūra*, the enclosure near the *mihrab* reserved for representatives of the government³⁴. Whether these doors were of the panelled type was not disclosed. The Syrian historian and traditionalist Ibn Kathīr (ca 700/1300 – 774/1373) mentions the renewal of the side doors of the *Bab al-barīd* (located in the west wall) on 2 *Shawwāl* 607/26 March 1211 with yellow copper³⁵. All these references are too generic to serve as conclusive evidence about the type of door. A search for early Umayyad depictions of doors within the precinct of the mosque, i.e. in the architectural constructions executed in glass mosaics in the western *riwāq* of the courtyard, unfortunately does not lead us any further either. Although the number of doorways are numerous, their doors are invisible for they are all open, their only decoration being a hanging pearl³⁶.

³⁰ Finster 1970-1971, 117-121, interprets the scenes executed in mosaics as Paradisial landscapes with eschatological connotations. According to Brisch (1988, 16-18), a vision of Paradise is depicted with thematic parallels between the mosaics and descriptive references in the Quran to paradise. The link to Paradise is also suggested by Flood (2001, 27-31), who interprets the constructions as heavenly architecture. Other scholars have proposed more worldly interpretations regarding the mosaics, even identifying them as actual cities. Lassus (1933, 36-37) suggested that the mosaics portray a (fantastic) vision of the city of Damascus and its surrounding villages. Kuban (1974, 15) interpreted them as depicting real and imaginary landscapes including depictions of Mecca, Medina, Antioch and Constantinople. According to Ettinghausen and Grabar (1987, 44), these depictions should be understood as idyllic representations of cities controlled by the Umayyads.

³¹ Meinecke 1971, 75-77.

³² Flood 1997, 62-64; Flood 2001, 76-77.

³³ Muqaddasī 1906, 158; Muqaddasī 1963, 171. An earlier, late ninth-century, source titled *juz fī khabar al-masjid al-jāmi' wa bināyatihī* on the construction of the mosque by Qādī Abū Bakr Ahmad b. al-Mu'alla b. Yazīd al-Asadī (d. 286/899) might have shed more light on the make and shape of the doors in the early days. It is, however, unfortunately lost but it was cited by such writers as Ibn Jubayr. See Elisséeff 1959, xxxix-xl.

³⁴ Muqaddasī 1906, 159; Muqaddasī 1963, 173. Also the twelfth-century Spanish traveller Ibn Jubayr 1907, 265, mentioned a door in this very location, stating it was an iron door through which the Umayyad caliph al-Mu'awiya (r. 41-60/661-680) used to enter the *maqsūra*.

³⁵ Sauvaire 1896, 212.

³⁶ For the pendant pearls and their link to Byzantine iconography, see Flood 2001, 15-56.

Although material evidence is lacking today, it is, however, well possible that Byzantine doors were used as spoils in the Umayyad Mosque. One source indeed corroborates this suggestion, for it mentions the incorporation into the mosque of pre-Islamic bronze doors of beautiful make, which were formerly part of the palace³⁷. These doors, now, might have served as a source of inspiration for the Mamluk metalworkers, either directly – in case the forerunners were still extant in the Mamluk period – or indirectly – in case the old doors had already been renewed in the intervening period, inspired by Byzantine panelled models –. This incorporation of spoils does not stand on its own but was part of a more widespread tendency to reuse quality materials from neighbouring constructions in the Umayyad Mosque. Thus capitals and columns were taken from the Church of St John the Baptist, some of which even bore dedicatory inscriptions referring to the Temple of Jupiter³⁸. The link with a Christian forerunner is further corroborated by the cruciform design that dominates the interior layout of the Mamluk metalwork doors in the north and east wall. This again suggests that the Mamluk metalworkers responsible for the doors were inspired by a Christian model that had either been incorporated within the walls of the mosque, or that was known to them from churches nearby³⁹. That even in the early Ottoman period reference was made to Byzantine ornament is shown on the early Ottoman metalwork door installed in the centre of the west wall of the mosque, where the occurrence of egg-and-tongue mouldings surrounding the panels establishes a link between the old southern wall in which such mouldings are still visibly cut into the stone and the metalwork door. By doing so, another likely transfer of a decorative motif associated with the former Byzantine church of St John the Baptist has come to light.

The incorporation of panelled doors of Byzantine make into Islamic religious buildings is not unique, as attested by the inclusion of a Byzantine metalwork door in the Great Mosque of Sana'a (Pl. 25). This two-leafed panelled door is likely to have been taken from the – now destroyed – nearby church of al-Qālīs. It is housed today in the *qibla*-wall to the east of the *mihrab*⁴⁰. This panelled door is composed of a wooden support which is covered with brass or bronze. Each leaf is divided up into three recessed vertical panels below one another. The two upper panels are void except for some embossed nails. The

central panels are densely decorated with six lines of Himyaritic inscriptions in relief, while the lower two panels are decorated with two sets of Byzantine arches in which are some embossed nails. Although its decoration is entirely different from that of the doors currently installed in the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus, the internal subdivision of the panels and its make are remarkably close.

Besides this, also pictorial evidence from the Umayyad period suggests the panelled doortype was already in use in Umayyad mosques, for panelled doors are depicted in the famous frontispiece belonging to a Quran found in the Great Mosque of Sana'a⁴¹. The frontispiece is datable to the time of al-Walīd, who was responsible both for the construction of the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus and for the enlargement of the Great Mosque in Sana'a. The frontispiece shows the plan of a mosque with two two-leafed doors. Each leaf is subdivided into three panels in a vertical row, the central of which is the largest. Each panel is decorated with a variety of geometric forms. Whether the doors were made of metal or wood is not clear for the artist did not make use of a distinctive colour palette for the fittings. The frontispiece does, however, suggest that in early Islam the panelled type of door was used within a religious Islamic context.

³⁷ Mas'ūdī in Maçoudi 1864, III, 272.

³⁸ Flood 2001, 201, and n. 88. The reuse of materials was not solely inspired for utilitarian reasons; according to Flood 2001, 201-203, aesthetic choices with symbolic overtones were important reasons for reuse as well.

³⁹ The number of churches in Damascus in the medieval period was, however, limited, for there was a restriction as to the permitted number of churches in Damascus. For an overview of active and demolished churches in Damascus in this period, see Immerzeel 2009, 38-40.

⁴⁰ Costa 1974, 504-505, Pl. XXVII; Garbini 1970, 401, Pls II, III; Serjeant/Lewcock 1983, 334-335, 337, Pl. 18.34. In al-Azraqī's account on the construction of al-Qālīs a door of bronze (*nubās*) is mentioned, 10 *dhīra* in height by 4 *dhīra* in width, 1 *dhīra* in all probability equating 48.25 cm (Wüstenfeld 1895, 89).

⁴¹ The leaf is now in Sana'a, *Dār al-Makhtūtāt*, inv. no. 20-33.1. For a depiction of this parchment leaf, see Piotrovski/Vrieze 1999, 100. Several authors have suggested a Syrian connection for the leaves of the Quran. Jenkins 1985, 23 concluded that the leaves were produced in Greater Syria between 691 and 743. Von Bothmer (1987, 16-17) even suggests that the building depicted in the frontispiece is the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus.

In terms of metalwork fittings, the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus is unique in two respects: not only does it house six late Mamluk and early Ottoman metalwork embellished doors when no other ornately decorated Mamluk metalwork doors are extant in Damascus, but the choice for its design, a panelled door, is also exceptional. When fires and wear demanded the renewal of these doors in the Mamluk period, it was a Byzantine model that in all probability inspired the craftsmen. Indicators of this Byzantine connection are not only the make, material and the implementation of decorative bosses but also the cruciform internal subdivision of some of the doors panels. The makers possibly reused over the centuries a type of door that might have been connected to the mosque's early days. This continuation of an old model was probably instigated in veneration of the mosque's long history. This esteem for and revival of techniques and decorative motives associated with the Umayyad and Byzantine period does not stand on its own but is part of a wider revival as observed for example in the glass mosaics and the vine frieze which were revived during Mamluk times. It should be kept in mind, though, that the doors were not literally copied: they were given a clear Islamic touch by the incorporation of Arabic epigraphy and the blazons of the patrons.

The *bāb al-barīd* (in the west wall):

There is general agreement among the Arabic authors that the *bāb al-barīd* is situated in the west wall of the mosque and that it has three openings: a large central one which is flanked by two smaller doors. According to the fourteenth-century traveller Ibn Battūta and the Damascene scholar al-ʿUmārī (1301-1349) the *bāb al-barīd* was surrounded by shops selling amongst others fruits, candles, perfume, and beverages⁴². Nowadays, the name *bāb al-barīd* is translated as Door of the Post. According to one author, however, *barīd* was a proper name of a legendary person who was supposedly the grandson of the mythical hero ʿAd⁴³.

Literary references shed some light on the material and make of the doors and their renewal. The geographer al-Muqaddasī recorded already in the tenth century that all three doors had two leaves that were plaited with gilded brass (*al-sufr al-mud-hahhab*)⁴⁴. The doors were reportedly restored more than once. Abū Shāma, who was quoted by the fourteenth-century Syrian historian Ibn Kathīr, says that on 2 *Shawwāl* 607/26 March 1211 the doors were renewed with yellow copper and installed in their position⁴⁵. On the order of Sultan al-Zāhir Baybars the doors were again restored in 668/1269-1270⁴⁶. In 819/1416-1417 the small side doors were installed in the wall, indicating a renewal of some sorts⁴⁷. A catastrophic fire took place on 27 Rajab 884/13 October 1479 destroying much of the immediate surroundings of the *bāb al-barīd*⁴⁸. And again, in the early Ottoman period on 14 Shaʿbān 930/27 June 1524, the central door fell prone to another fire that had started in the shop of a *kunāfa*-seller⁴⁹.

The *Bāb al-jayrūn* (also known as *bāb al-sāʿāt* and *bāb al-nawfara*) (in the east wall):

The entrance of the east wall of the mosque is known by three names, that of *bāb al-jayrūn*⁵⁰, *bāb al-sāʿāt*⁵¹ (Door of the Clock) and *bāb al-nawfara* (Door of the Fountain). The name *Jayrūn* referred, according to Masʿūdī, to the founder of the city of Damascus, the son of Saʿad, son of the mythical hero ʿAd⁵². This *Jayrūn* ordered the construction of a large edifice called *Iram with the pillars*, which contained bronze doors, and which stood in the vicinity of the east wall of the Great Mosque.

⁴² For the observation by Ibn Battūta, see Defrémery/Sanguinetti 1853, I, 209-210. For the reference of al-ʿUmārī, see ʿUmārī 1924, 194.

⁴³ Jāhiz in Gaudefroy-Demombynes 1923, 41.

⁴⁴ Muqaddasī 1906, 158; Muqaddasī 1963, 171.

⁴⁵ Ibn Kathīr in Sauvaire 1896, 212.

⁴⁶ al-Nuʿaymī in Sauvaire 1896, 226.

⁴⁷ Sauvaire 1896, 218.

⁴⁸ Ibn Tūlūn in Sauvaire 1896, 226-227.

⁴⁹ Ibn Jumʿa 1949, 8; Laoust 1952, 177.

⁵⁰ Muqaddasī 1906, 158; Muqaddasī 1963, 171; Idrīsī 1885, 13; Ibn ʿAsākir in Nuʿaymī 1951, 20.

⁵¹ Ibn ʿAsākir in Nuʿaymī 1951, 70-71; ʿUmārī 1924, 194.

⁵² Maṣūūdī 1864, 271-272.

⁵³ Ibn ʿAsākir in Nuʿaymī 1951, 205.

According to Mas'ūdī, some of these doors were transferred and reused in the mosque.

The name *bāb al-sā'āt* (Door of the Clock) refers to the presence of a clock nearby. Until the second half of the twelfth century, a clock indicating the hours was fixed near a door in the south wall of the mosque. On the order of Nūr al-Dīn b. Zengī a mechanical clock, comprising, according to Ibn 'Asākir, bronze birds and a bronze snake, was added near the door in the east wall⁵³. This eastern door now came to be referred to as the *bāb al-sā'āt*⁵⁴.

Muqaddasī is the most explicit about the location and material of the doors⁵⁵. He states that this entrance was located opposite the *bāb al-barīd*, somewhat to its left. He added that it was similar in style to the latter door, i.e. consisting of two small doors flanking a large central one, all double-leafed and plaited with gilded brass. One had to ascend steps to reach it⁵⁶. It was here that the astrologers of the city gathered.

The literary sources do not reveal much about the history of the doors after Muqaddasī's description and during the Ayyubid and Mamluk period. There is, however, one explicit reference that recalls that in *Muharram* 820/February-March 1417 the shops near the eastern doors were demolished so as to allow the small entrances to be reopened after they had been closed off during the civil unrest⁵⁷. Then, in *Safar* 820/March-April 1417 two small doors were reinstalled.

The *bāb al-fārādīs* (also referred to as *bāb al-amara*, *bāb al-nattāfīn* and *bāb al-natfāniyīn*) (in the north wall):

This door is referred to by three names, one of which is the *bāb al-fārādīs*⁵⁸ (Door of Paradise), an allocation that might allude to the ancient city of Paradisos, which was located towards the north⁵⁹. It was also known as the *bāb al-nattāfīn*⁶⁰ or the *bāb al-natfāniyīn*⁶¹, the door of the pastry-shops. According to Muqaddasī it was two-leafed and located opposite the *mihṛāb*, i.e. in the arcade in the north wall, where it was dominated by a minaret⁶² and where it adjoined the *khānqāh al-Shamīshātiya*⁶³. The sources do not give specifics concerning the make or restoration of this door.

The *bāb al-ziyāda* (also known as *bāb al-sā'āt*); (south wall)

The door in the *qibla*-wall of the Umayyad mosque was known among tenth-century authors

by the name of *bāb al-sā'āt* (the Door of the Clock), for a horologium was positioned in its vicinity⁶⁴. Later on, after another clock had been installed near the eastern door on the order of Nūr al-Dīn b. Zengī in the second half of the twelfth century, the door was referred to by historians and travellers as *bāb al-ziyāda* (Door of the Augmentation)⁶⁵. Not much is disclosed on the door's outward appearance except for the remark that it was two-leafed and plain⁶⁶. Two authors do, however mention a connection between the door and the son of the founder of the Mosque, Khālīd b. al-Walīd. Part of his lance was supposedly displayed on the door⁶⁷.

Lost unnamed doors

Although today only one large wooden door is present in the *qibla*-wall, several comments indicate that one or more metalwork doors were once incorporated there. The tenth-century geographer al-Muqaddasī mentioned several plaited doors between the palace of the sultan adjacent to the mosque and the *maqsūra*, the enclosure near the *mihṛāb* reserved for representatives of the government⁶⁸. Whether these doors were of the panelled type was not disclosed. Also the twelfth-century Spanish traveller

⁵⁴ This explains why around A.D. 985 Muqaddasī (Muqaddasī 1906, 158; Muqaddasī 1963, 171-172) still refers to the door under consideration as the *bāb al-jayrūn*, while using the name *bāb al-sā'āt* to indicate the door in the south wall.

⁵⁵ Muqaddasī 1906, 158; Muqaddasī 1963, 171-172.

⁵⁶ Idrīsī 1885, 13 added that these steps were wide and made of marble.

⁵⁷ Nu'aymī 1951, 219-220.

⁵⁸ Idrīsī 1885, 13; Muqaddasī 1906, 158-159; Muqaddasī 1963, 172.

⁵⁹ Gaudefroy-Demombynes 1923, 33, n. 4.

⁶⁰ 'Umarī 1924, 194.

⁶¹ Ibn Battūta in Defrémery/Sanguinetti 1853, I, 210.

⁶² Muqaddasī 1906, 158; Muqaddasī 1963, 172.

⁶³ 'Umarī 1924, 194.

⁶⁴ This is related by Qādī Abū 'Abd Allāh b. Ahmad b. Zabr, (d. 329/940) and by his son, the historian Abū Sulaymān b. Zabr (d. 379/989), who related a story once told by his father. See Elisséeff 1959, 70-71. See also Muqaddasī 1906, 158 and Muqaddasī 1963, 172.

⁶⁵ Ibn Battūta in Defrémery/Sanguinetti 1853, I, 206; Ibn Kathīr quoted in Nu'aymī 1951, 205; 'Umarī 1924, 194; Yāqūt in Wüstenfeld 1867, 597.

⁶⁶ Muqaddasī 1906, 158 and Muqaddasī 1963, 172.

⁶⁷ Ibn Battūta in Defrémery/Sanguinetti 1853 I, 206; Yāqūt in Wüstenfeld 1867, 597.

⁶⁸ Muqaddasī 1906, 159; Muqaddasī 1963, 173.

Ibn Jubayr referred to a door in this very location, stating it was made of iron and that it was used by the Umayyad Caliph al-Mu'āwiya (r. 41-60/661-680) to enter the *maqṣūra*⁶⁹.

In the late fifteenth century another author touched upon the existence of metalwork doors in this part of the Mosque. Ibn al-Himsī recorded the restoration of the southwestern doors of the Umayyad Mosque in 885/1480 by specialized metalwork beaters from Aleppo, which had to be renewed after a fire in 884/1479⁷⁰. It remains unclear whether he was referring here to former doors in the *qibla*-wall or to metalwork doors in the gabled entrance façade of the Umayyad Mosque that are currently of wood. These statements do, however, make clear, that metalwork doors were, in all probability, more common in the Umayyad Mosque than is visible today.

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⁶⁹ Ibn Jubayr 1907, 265.

⁷⁰ Ibn al-Himsī 1999, 252; (translated by) Behrens-Abouseif 2004, 293.

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A New Approach to the Problem of Pattern Books in Early Byzantine Mosaics: The Depiction of the Giraffe in the Near East as a Case Study

Diklah ZOHAR

INTRODUCTION

The theory of pattern books has gained much popularity within the discipline of art history in general and within the study of ancient mosaics in particular¹. Lacking material evidence of such books that survived from Antiquity², the theory is mainly founded upon indirect evidence. The application of pattern books or shared models has been suggested as the mechanisms behind the appearance of similar iconography in works of art that are distant from one another in geography and/or chronology, when no direct model seems to have been available. The theory finds expression in the assumption that artists, and mosaicists among them, did not copy their designs from nature and rarely sought to create an original design, but reproduced their work based upon earlier models and shared patterns³. What the content of such a pattern book exactly was, is still a subject of debate.

Depictions of animals are among the most popular motifs in early Byzantine mosaics of the Near East⁴. Animals appear as part of hunt and pastoral scenes, symbolic depictions and as isolated motifs within a geometric frame or a vegetal scroll. Although representations of fantastic hybrid creatures, such as winged lions, griffins and other mythological creatures can also be found, the animals depicted most often are those species that belong to the natural habitat of the Near East. Birds, fish, domesticated animals and wild beasts are all part of the artistic repertoire. Animals that appear in fight and hunt scenes, such as the leopard, the lion, the boar and the bear are now extinct in that area, but appear to have still existed there during Antiquity. Desert areas would possibly have been a source for less common species, such as the wild ass, the ostrich, wolves and lizards. Conspicuous are depictions that include exotic species, especially wild animals of African or Indian origin, such as the elephant, the zebra, the rhinoceros and the giraffe that

are without any doubt alien to the Middle East, and were so also during Late Antiquity⁵. Depictions of these four animals in early Byzantine mosaics are the focus of the current investigation, with the purpose to shed new light upon the theory of pattern books.

How did these species enter the artistic repertoire of the early Byzantine artists? Did artists and commissioners actually have the chance to see these animals? How were they depicted and what implications does this have for our understanding of the work process? Did artistic depiction rely upon direct

¹ The theory of pattern books had already been advanced by the scholars of the nineteenth century (Buchta 1979, 13; Tikkanen 1889). Although more pronounced in relation to medieval art and especially manuscript illumination (Kitzinger 1975; Scheller 1963; Weitzmann 1947), the theory had been argued for mosaic art in Antiquity and became widely accepted since (Dauphin 1978; Dunbabin 1978, 9). Buchta sees the pattern book as an iconographical guide of, for example, narrative cycles, rather than a motif book (Buchta 1979, 66), while Dauphin advances the idea of a pattern book as a collection of motifs, which are independent from any specific iconographic context (Dauphin 1978, 408).

² Such books would probably be easy to perish due to intensive use and the fragile nature of the material that was presumably used for their making – either papyrus or parchment. Loose pages illustrating the canon of painting were recovered from Ptolemaic Egypt (Scheller 1963, 44-45). The earliest patterns in western Europe are attributed to the tenth century (Scheller 1963, 49-52).

³ Dauphin 1978, 408; Hachlili 1987, 55; Ovadia/Ovadia 1987, 184.

⁴ Dauphin executed counting according to percentage as well as absolute occurrences. Her work refers to images that appear within the *inhabited scroll* composition (Dauphin 1978, 419-423).

⁵ Prehistoric elephants (*Palaeoloxodon antiquus*) are known to have been hunted by prehistoric hunters in the Near East. An excavation at the 780,000-year-old site of Gesher Benot Ya'akov near the banks of the Jordan River, yielded a skeleton of a hunted prehistoric elephant (Hershman 1998). In historic times, however, the elephant had been extinct. Re-introduction of the tamed elephant in the region was its use in the battlefield by the Seleucid army during the Hellenistic period.

observation and copying from nature, upon visual memory and production formulae, or upon patterns that had been transmitted, copied and spread among craftsmen? And if all depictions go back to one or more original sources' – is it possible to trace their track of transmission? Although these questions are usually approached from an iconographic point of view, the current study pays attention also to stylistic and formalistic characteristics of the depictions

and the influence of artistic technique and inlay pattern of the tesserae upon the visual result.

WILD BEASTS IN MOSAICS⁶

Many of the mosaics that originally included figurative and animal depictions have not fully survived. Some suffered natural damage, while in others, mainly figurative representations were deliberately removed already in Antiquity.

The earliest representation of exotic beasts that has come down to us from the Near East appears in the fourth-century mosaic of Lydda (modern Lod) in Israel. It belonged to a private villa and shows both high quality and a superb preservation condition⁷. The northern carpet of the mosaic contains within a central octagon an emblematic depiction of open scenery; in the background are two mountains, on which a lion and a lioness are sitting facing each other. Beyond the mountains is a lake or sea, in which a water monster is dwelling⁸. In the foreground are a tiger and a zebu, and in the middle ground are an elephant, an African rhinoceros (with a double horn) and a giraffe with the horns of a deer (Pl. 1)⁹. The animals are depicted in a naturalistic manner, placed on a ground line and even seem to cast shadow. The positioning of the beasts in three height levels and partly overlapping each other, creates the illusion of depth and open space and it seems that the artist wished to create an illusion of animals in their natural habitat. This mosaic is dated to the fourth century, on basis of the ceramic and numismatic finds that were found scattered in the debris upon the floor.

Most depictions of exotic beasts derive from sixth-century mosaics. The synagogue at Gaza Maiumas included a few types of decorations. The central hall was decorated with panels, while the aisles were decorated with vine scrolls creating medallions, each of which includes an animal, in a composition that received the name *inhabited scrolls*¹⁰. The mosaic suffered much damage, and only a few sections have survived. A panel in the central hall of the synagogue shows King David, identified by a Hebrew inscription, playing the harp, with animals surrounding him, in an iconography that reminds of that of Orpheus (Pl. 2)¹¹. A lioness and a snake can still be recognized, but the rest suffered much damage. Asher Ovadiah identifies the animal behind the lioness as a giraffe¹². It has a long neck, but the horns of a gazelle. Since the body is

⁶ Exotic animals also appear outside the region of Syria-Palestina-Arabia, although not as often as one would expect. For example, North African mosaics do depict elephants (Blanchard-Lemée 1996, 35, Figs 3, 4, 6, 63; Dunbabin 1978, Figs 28, 186) and ostriches (Blanchard-Lemée 1996, Figs 5, 156), but do not depict giraffes and zebras. On the other hand, the mosaic of the great hunt in Piazza Armerina in Sicily (that was produced under North African artistic influence) depicts also a rhinoceros. Elephants are the most popular of the four mentioned beasts and appear in the mosaic of the great palace of Constantinople (Brett/Macauley/Stevenson 1947, Pls 31, 41), in a mosaic floor in Spain in a scene depicting Orpheus (Alvarez-Martinez 1994, Figs 6, 7), and in British mosaics (Smith 1965, Figs 1, 2, 12). Other African animals are rare in mosaics. Dauphin recognized a crown crane, the distribution of which is Kenya, Uganda and Sudan at the pavement of Bait-Mari in Lebanon (Dauphin 1978, 407). Other animals are sometimes difficult to identify with certainty. The mosaic from the ambulatory of the so-called Martyrion at Seleucia, the port of Antioch (dated to the second half of the fifth century) depicts a free composition of birds and various animals, of which one may be a zebra. In the same floor also an elephant is shown (Dunbabin 1999, Fig. 193).

⁷ Avisar 1999, Pls 2, 3, 4.

⁸ Such creatures usually belong to the repertoire of marine depictions and are often ridden by *Nereides* or accompanied by other sea scenes. The symbol of *Capricorn* in the zodiac was represented as a goat with a fishtail and was well known in the artistic repertoire of the East (Dothan 1983, Pl. 16, Fig. 6). Although such creatures seem to belong to the category of imaginary creatures, there is evidence that, at least some, did believe in their existence (Braslavi 1967, 129). Animal books sometimes include imaginary creatures next to existing animals, such as the griffin and phoenix (Kruk 2001, 355, 379). Artistically, the visual tradition concerning the iconography of these creatures was well known throughout Antiquity.

⁹ Photograph by Miki Davidov and Clara Amit in Avisar 1999, Pl. 3.

¹⁰ This design is also called sometimes 'peopled scroll'. Both terms refer to the design as a scroll creating a set of round frames, in which a wide range of figurative (but sometimes also non-animate) depictions appear. For analysis of the repertoire of designs: Dauphin 1978, 411, n. 4. For the Hellenistic source of the motif: Toynbee/Ward-Perkins 1950.

¹¹ Ovadiah/Ovadiah 1987, Pl. LIX.

¹² Ovadiah/Ovadiah 1987, 61.

completely destroyed, identification is difficult. The neck seems too long for a gazelle, but if a giraffe, it misses the typical skin structure and is too small in comparison to the lioness next to it. On the other hand, Byzantine art often ignores correct proportions even within one and the same section, and a depiction of a giraffe with horns of a gazelle is just as inaccurate as the depiction of a giraffe with the horns of a deer in the Lydda mosaic (Pl. 1). Be that as it may, this giraffe has a totally different appearance than the two other giraffes that are depicted in the southern aisle of the same synagogue.

The scroll motif in the southern aisle includes in one row a zebra (in the central scroll medallion) and

two giraffes, one on each side, facing one another (Pls 3, 4)¹³. The artist did not shorten the long necks of the giraffes in order to fit it into the space of the medallion, but allowed their neck to pass beyond the borderline. As a result, the giraffes' heads are depicted outside the scroll itself. The neck of the right giraffe is decorated with a band, probably as indication of ownership¹⁴. The two giraffes

¹³ Ovadiah/Ovadia 1987, Pl. LIII1. A good illustration of the zebra from Gaza Maiumas (by the photographer Zeev Radovan) in: Ben-Dov/Rappel 1987, 83.

¹⁴ Mosaics often depict wild animals with bands and even bells around their neck, indicating that this is not a wild animal



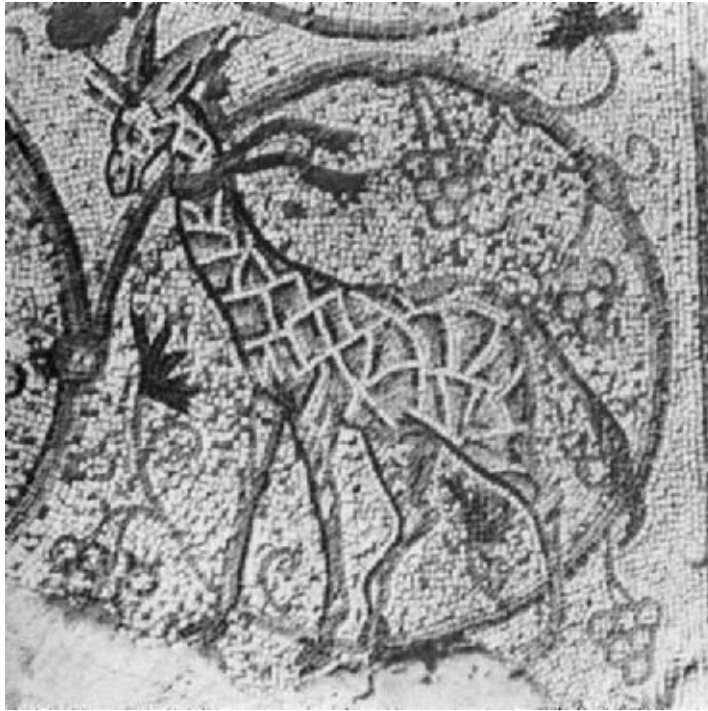
Pl. 1. Central detail of a mosaic at a private villa in Lydda, Israel (Avisar 1999, Pl. 3)



*Pl. 2. Panel of King David playing the harp;
mosaic from the synagogue of Gaza Maiumas
(Ovadiab/Ovadiab 1987, Pl. CLXXVIII)*



*Pl. 3. Scroll; mosaic at the southern aisle
of the synagogue of Gaza Maiumas
(Ovadiab/Ovadiab 1987, Pl. LIII, Fig. 1)*



*Pl. 4. Detail of Pl. 3: the right giraffe
(Ovadiah/Ovadiah 1987, Plate LV, Fig. 2)*



*Pl. 5. Giraffe Camelopardis Rothschildi against Giraffe
Camelopardis reticulata (photograph author)*



Pl. 6. The split hoofs of a giraffe (photograph author)



Pl. 7. Left elephant; mosaic of Maon-Nirim (photograph author)



Pl. 8. Right elephant; mosaic of Maon-Nirim (photograph author)

seem to differ in their skin pattern and this may be an attempt of the artist to represent two different types of giraffes. The left giraffe may be a representation of the so-called 'wine leaf giraffe'¹⁵ owing to its typical skin structure, which is different from the type that has the more common patchy pattern (Pl. 5)¹⁶.

The mosaic of Gaza Maiumas preserved an inscription, which states the date in which the mosaic was completed: the year A.D. 508/9¹⁷. If the identification of Ovadia is correct, the fragments from the mosaic of Gaza included three depictions of giraffes: two in the aisle scrolls and one in the nave panel. Except of their skin structure, the two giraffes in the scrolls arrangement are rather similar and their depiction strives to realism.

The synagogue of the nearby site Maon-Nirim has a mosaic decorated with a field of inhabited vine scrolls, in a strict symmetrical composition. Among the depicted animals are two elephants (Pls 7, 8). In this mosaic, each animal is isolated within a medallion and the symmetry seems the leading principle of positioning. Except for the lions at the end and peacocks at the entrance, the order of animals seems arbitrary. Like in other floors of the early Byzantine period, all animals are reduced to the measure of the scroll, ignoring realistic proportion between them. The elephants are depicted in the same size as the duck and the deer.

The nave mosaic of the Church of St Stephen at Beer-Shema' is also decorated with a field of inhabited vine scrolls. One of the medallions includes an African riding an elephant (Pl. 9)¹⁸. The two left-most medallions in the same row depict a man leading a giraffe (Pl. 10).

The mosaic in the church of Kissufim in the Negev is only partly preserved; the mosaic in the nave is completely lost and only the northern aisle and two sections between the columns have partly survived¹⁹. Among sections of hunt and a pastoral scene appears a section with an elephant and a giraffe, which has the feet of a camel (Pl. 11). The pastoral scene includes a man milking a goat, and the hunting scenes a winged lion hunting a spotted ostrich, a man mounted on a horse hunting a leopard, and a dog hunting a gazelle and a rabbit. The depictions between the columns show a man leading a loaded camel and portraits of the donors who apparently financed the work. The mosaic carries an inscription with a very precise date of completion, equivalent to the 4th of August 576²⁰.

The large concentration of exotic animals in the region of Gaza made Dauphin suggest that the occasion of transportation of two giraffes and an elephant to Emperor Anastasius, described by Timotheus of Gaza at the end of the fifth century, was the trigger for the depictions of these animals in mosaics in this region²¹. Recent excavations in the region of Gaza still yield new giraffes' representations, dating to the fifth and sixth centuries²². The recent excavation of the Lydda mosaic, however, shows that exotic beasts entered the artistic repertoire of mosaicists in the East already in the fourth century. The depiction in Piazza Armerina (discussed below) confirms that in the fourth century transports of these animals already took place on an organized scale. Dauphin further suggests that the high concentration of elephants, giraffes and zebras in the mosaics of the Gaza region may be explained by the location of Gaza on the important merchant route from the South to the North along the *Via Maris*²³.

Wild beasts, however, seem to have entered the repertoire of mosaic craftsmen also further than the main merchant route. At the complex of the Memorial of Moses at Mount Nebo near Madaba in Jordan, the mosaic of the Diakonikon-baptistery at the northeast side of the church depicts a free composition in registers. Each register seems to be dedicated to a different subject matter: the upper register to hunting scenes on foot and the

in its natural habitat, but under human ownership. Examples: gazelle with a bell around its neck at the Theotokos Chapel on Mount Nebo (Piccirillo 1992, Pls 173, 200); birds in the Church of the Lions in Umm al Rasas (Piccirillo 1992, Pls 342, 343); A marten with a red band around its neck fighting a snake in Beer-Shema' (Gazit/Lender 1993, 276, Pl. XXB). See also Pl. 10 in this article.

¹⁵ The scientific names of the giraffe of this type are: Rothschildi, Thornicrofti and Tippelskirchi (Pl. 5).

¹⁶ The types are not necessarily a different species, but one species with different characteristics. They do interbreed and every individual has a unique pattern (Dagg 1962, 550).

¹⁷ Ovadia/Ovadia 1987, 61, no. 83, Pls LIII, LV.

¹⁸ Gazit/Lender 1992, 33-40, colour plate there.

¹⁹ Cohen 1979, drawing on p. 20 and a photo on p. 22; also in Tsafrir 1993, 277-282.

²⁰ Cohen 1979, 19; Tsafrir 1993, 277.

²¹ Dauphin 1978, 407-408.

²² Humbert 1999, 216-218, see there a photograph of the mosaic floor from the baptistery of the church excavated in Jabalyah.

²³ Dauphin 1978, 408.

following register to hunting scenes on horseback. The third register depicts a pastoral scene and in the lower register two men of foreign origin appear, leading three animals on a leash: a black man leads an ostrich, and a man in Phrygian clothes a zebra and a camel-like spotted animal (Pls 12, 13)²⁴. Also here, a long dedicatory inscription provides the date of completion, corresponding to A.D. 530²⁵.

The complex of the so-called Kyria Maria monastery at Scythopolis (modern Beth Shean) in the north of Israel preserves a number of mosaics. Exotic animals appear in two of them. The main hall is decorated with a geometric carpet with a cycle of the personifications of the months in the centre. The geometric carpet creates a few hexagons, in which various scenes and beasts appear. Among them are a giraffe, an ostrich and an elephant (Fig. 1; lower side of Pl. 14)²⁶. In the same complex, in a room that was designated 'Room L', appears a composition of twelve vine scrolls creating medallions in which various scenes are depicted. The upper medallion on the right includes a black man leading on a leash an animal that Ovadia/Ovadia identify as a giraffe (Pls 15, 16)²⁷. Despite the small scale of the animal in comparison to the man standing next to it, the two typical horns on its head identify it as a giraffe. Despite the fact that both giraffes appear within one site, at a small distance from one another, their appearances differ greatly. The mosaic in the monastery of Kyria Maria carries inscriptions that enable to date the mosaics to A.D. 567²⁸.

In the south aisle at the church of Beth-Guvrin, various animals were featured in square frames surrounding a central tondo. In one of these squares appears an elephant (Pl. 17)²⁹. Also the small synagogue in Beth Shean, situated within the 'House of Leontis' complex depicts an elephant, with no other exotic animals (Fig. 1)³⁰. The mosaic of the

church of al-Khadir in Jordan was decorated with a few carpets (Pl. 18). The western one is a free composition in registers, depicting various scenes and animals within a scenery of trees. Despite the intentional removal of the figures, which happened already in Antiquity, the iconography of many of the depictions can be recognized. On the right side of the second row from below a Phrygian man is leading a spotted camel, the only image that survived the destruction, which shows great similarity to the spotted camel at the Old Diakonikon (Pl. 13). At the opposite side of the same row was another Phrygian figure, holding a trident, seated on an elephant. In the lower row, a giraffe is positioned before a tree, and despite the damage, it is clearly identified by the two horns on its head (Pl. 18)³¹.

A few characteristics can be noted in relation to these depictions. First, there seems to be no fixed grouping of exotic animals. They may appear as a group, but at times, only two (a giraffe and an elephant or a giraffe and a zebra) appear together. The only animal of the four that appears as a single specimen is the elephant, which seems to have entered the more common repertoire of animals. Secondly, some mosaics repeat a certain specimen more than once. In the synagogue in Gaza Maiumas the giraffe is depicted at least twice, and if Ovadia/Ovadia's identification is correct, it appears there three times. Also the floor from the monastery of Kyria Maria in Beth Shean depicts a giraffe twice, though in two completely different manners. The synagogue of Maon depicts an elephant twice because of the symmetrical nature of the composition. Thirdly, the subject of exotic beasts seems to have become an iconographic subject in its own right and was placed next to depictions of hunt and pastoral scenes. This is the case in Kissufim and in Mount Nebo, where each of the different panels or registers focuses on one visual aspect of the three subjects (either hunt scenes, pastoral scenes or exotic animals). As such, their depiction seems to express a specific subject matter, that is: animals for display. The animals are sometimes led on a leash by a person, himself of foreign origin, or, in the case of elephants, they are ridden upon.

EXOTIC ANIMALS IN THE NEAR EAST

Out of the four species, the giraffe, the rhinoceros, the zebra and the elephant, the Asian elephant is known to have been introduced as a fighting animal

²⁴ Piccirillo 1992, Fig. 166.

²⁵ Piccirillo 1992, 146.

²⁶ Ovadia/Ovadia 1987, 27, Pl. XXI; Stern 1993, 222.

²⁷ Ovadia/Ovadia 1987, 29, Pl. XXIV; Stern 1993, 223. Dauphin identifies this animal as a bushbuck (Dauphin 1978, 407).

²⁸ Chiat 1980, 11; Ovadia/Ovadia 1987, 27, Pl. XXI.

²⁹ Ovadia/Ovadia 1987, cat. no. 17, 19-20, Pls XI, 2.

³⁰ Bahat 1981, 82-85. Photo in Hachlili 1987, 51.

³¹ Piccirillo identifies it as a zebra (Piccirillo 1992, 129, Fig. 142).



Fig 1. The synagogue at the 'House of Leontis' in Beth Shean. An elephant in a scroll
(source: Ovadiab/Ovadiab 1987, Pl. XXXIII)

during the Hellenistic period by the Seleucid army as well as by the Punic army in North Africa. There is evidence that elephants continued to be used in Rome itself as work and spectacle animals. For the Near East, however, it has been suggested that the familiarity with exotic animals during the Roman period derives from occasional passing through of animal transports³². It seems that exotic animals were a precious commodity and were considered a prestigious gift for kings and rulers. Giraffes, elephants and other wild beasts were apparently sent as gifts from Antiquity throughout the Middle Ages and until modern times³³. If giraffes were killed as a spectacle in Roman amphitheatres, it did not find expression in artistic depictions of circus games and amphitheatre spectacles. Later Arabic sources mention slaughter of giraffes for their meat and skin, but most mosaics that depict exotic beasts seem to present them as animals of display and the literary sources seem to support this impression.

One ancient literary source that mentions a transport of exotic animals is that of Timotheus of Gaza in his *De Animalibus* written in the fifth century. This literary source recorded the passage through Gaza of a man from India, bringing two giraffes to the Emperor Anastasius³⁴. The original Greek text is lost, but parts of it have been preserved in various sources³⁵. One of the later texts that mention the work of Timotheus as explicit source reference, is the Arabic book *on the nature of animals* by Marwazî, a court physician of the Seljuk Sultan Maliksha in the first half of the twelfth century:

³² Avi-Yonah 1975, 191.

³³ Kruk 2008, 570-580.

³⁴ Bodenheimer/Rabinowitz 1949, 5.

³⁵ Bodenheimer/Rabinowitz 1949, 14-18; Kruk 2001, 355-359; Morgan 1988, 268.

There came to us a man from India, a messenger of the king of India, with two giraffes covered with cloths and harnessed with many bridles and nose straps, that he wanted to bring to the king of Constantinople. He came to our house, and I was full of amazement about what I saw of their nature and shape. They had a stature of a camel in height, a skin like that of a panther, long forelegs, a prominent breast and a slender neck. Their head was like that of a camel, and so was their mouth. Their teeth were like those of a cow, and their tails were the size of a gazelle's...³⁶.

That exotic animals were sent as presents all through the Middle Ages and until modern times is apparent from literary sources. Rulers seem to have held private zoos, in which exotic specimens were kept, either for hunt or for display and pleasure. One of the earlier zoological gardens in Europe was owned by Emperor Charlemagne. In 802 he received the white elephant Abul-Abbas as a gift

from the Caliph of Bagdad, Harun-ar-Rashid³⁷. The existence of such gardens at all large European courts is well documented³⁸, and the situation in Byzantium as well as under the Muslim rulers, was not much different. Emperor Nikophoros Phokas hosted in 968 a German delegation at a park in Bithynia, which included wild beasts³⁹. Documentation from the eleventh and twelfth century indicate that the Philopation, a park located to the north of Constantinople, has functioned as a 'deliciarum locus'⁴⁰, and in 1053, Emperor Constantine IX Monomachos was sent a giraffe from Egypt, as is evident from the fourteenth-century text on the manuscript of Timotheus, that preserved the eleventh-century comment:

This was seen in our times, too: for also to the Emperor (Constantine) Monochamos were these two animals brought from India, and were at each opportunity shown to the people as a marvel, in the theatre of Constantinople⁴¹.

Cairo is known to have had a royal menagerie in the late ninth century that included leopards, panthers, elephants, and giraffes. Byzantine ambassadors witnessed in A.D. 917 the ceremonial role that was played by lines of elephants, giraffes, leopards and lions at the palace of the caliph in Baghdad⁴². In the year A.D. 1261, Baybars, the Sultan of Egypt, sent a giraffe as a gift to the Emperor Michael VIII⁴³. The historian Pachymeres describes the marvel of the sight of the giraffe as it was walked through the Agora. Apparently, such a sight was a real spectacle in the city of Constantinople and he described it in detail 'to remind those who have seen it and to enlighten those that have not'⁴⁴.

In 1489 the Mamluk sultan signed a commercial treaty with the Republic of Florence and he sent a royal gift to Lorenzo de Medici, which included, among other animals, also a giraffe⁴⁵. There is no direct evidence that spectacle opportunities occurred regularly in the Near East or that a zoo existed in the region during the sixth century, but the artistic depictions of gardens where wild and exotic beasts walk freely seem to suggest that the phenomenon was known to the contemporaries⁴⁶. Another question is whether artists, commissioners and the general public had access to such gardens and whether there was a permanent possibility to see and study these animals. The opportunity to observe those

³⁶ Kruk 2001, 364.

³⁷ The life of this white elephant is well documented. Abul-Abbas was a wild-born elephant who was captured and trained and was sent in 798 as a present to the court of Charlemagne. His journey from the Abbasid Empire to Europe started with a crossing of the Mediterranean Sea by ship. The elephant was accompanied by his trainer, a Jewish North African named Isaac. In the spring of 802 they started the march over the Alps to the emperor's residence in Aachen, arriving on July 1, 802. Abul-Abbas was exhibited on various occasions when the court was assembled, and was eventually housed in Augsburg in southern Bavaria. He died in 810 probably of pneumonia, when he was joined to the battle against the Danes, after crossing the cold water of the Rhine. About the elephant and the diplomatic contacts of the Carolingian Court, see Sypeck 2006.

³⁸ Ševčenco 2002, 77, 82-83. Ševčenco differs between 'game parks, where animals were also hunted, 'menageries', where animals were raised to be used in the hippodrome, and 'animal parks', which were mainly for pleasure.

³⁹ Ševčenco 2002, 72-74.

⁴⁰ Ševčenco 2002, 72-74.

⁴¹ Bodenheimer/Rabinowitz 1949, 31; Ševčenco 2002, 77. The 'two animals' in the text refer to a giraffe and an elephant.

⁴² Ševčenco 2002, 76.

⁴³ Ševčenco 2002, 78.

⁴⁴ Ševčenco 2002, 78.

⁴⁵ A ceiling painting by Giorgio Vasari in the Palazzo Vecchio from 1559 depicts Lorenzo the Magnificent surrounded by the gifts of the Sultan of Egypt, a giraffe among them; Wansbrough 1965, 39-40.

⁴⁶ See especially the depiction in al-Khadir (Pl. 19).

animals in real life, however, clearly did exist, at least in the rare occasion of travelling transports such as the one described by Timotheus.

The difficulties of transporting these animals and providing the conditions for their survival in a foreign climatic region must have demanded complicated logistics. A transport of an adult untamed animal without the help of anaesthetics was certainly a difficult task. Some of the evidence, like the report of the transport of Zaráffa⁴⁷, shows that transport was often practiced with young animals and the very capturing of these animals often involved killing the mother and capturing the young. It then had to get used to drinking cow's milk before transport could commence. In order to provide the amount of milk that was necessary to keep the animal alive along a journey that took at least a few months, it was necessary to hold a hoard of cows that accompanied the animal. The transport route to Constantinople seems to have taken place via Ethiopia and Yemen to India and then westwards and not directly from Africa via Egypt to the North. It is probably for this reason that India was thought to have been the natural habitat of these animals. This is supported by the account of Timotheus, which records that the man travelling to Constantinople was coming from India. It can be imagined, that such a journey had involved much animal suffer and that many of these animals did not reach their destination alive.

A representation of hunting, capturing and transporting wild animals in cages and wagons is depicted in the corridor of the Great Hunt mosaic in Piazza Armerina in Sicily, dated to the first third of the fourth century⁴⁸. It seems as though the mosaic is representing successive stages in the process. While the left and right ends focus upon capturing the animals, the middle left and middle right sections refer to transport on foot, with help of carts and wagons, while the direction of movement is clearly towards the centre, where ships are being loaded (Fig. 2)⁴⁹. Transport seems to have taken place in a few successive stages, that involved travelling on foot as well as shipping over sea, and the need to load and at times perhaps even reload the animals a few times until reaching the final destination. Despite the damage of the mosaic, the central depiction shows at least two ships. Curiously, they are not just being loaded with the animals, but it seems that there is an exchange of animals taking place. Remarkable are the scenes of capture that obviously involved much danger. In order to intense

the impression that the mosaic was meant to have upon the viewer, the events are given mythical proportions, depicting also a griffin next to various wild animals that are associated with known myths, such as the bull and the boar. Beside the capture scenes, the mosaic depicts also many hunt scenes. Although these may be added for the sake of impressing the viewer, they may be indicating that the working teams needed themselves to be protected during the process of capturing the wild beasts. Some animals demanded much force to handle. The wild bull is being held by three men, and three other men are pulling a rhinoceros with cables while two others in the crew, one at each side of the heavy animal, give them instructions (Pl. 19)⁵⁰. Further on, an elephant is climbing a ramp to enter the ship and other animals were already placed in cages to be carried into the ships. The people helping in the mounting of the animals are represented as soldiers, suggesting that the task of capturing and transporting the animals was an organized expedition. The choice of the subject may indicate that the owner of the villa was involved in providing these animals and in the orders of their capture.

It is probably both the strange appearance of the animals as well as the rarity of seeing them, which brought about strange stories regarding their conception and looks. The Arabic *Book on the Natures of Animals* of Marwazî, quoting Timotheus, says the following about the rhinoceros:

*Atiuniyûs [Timotheus] says: '...Its size is like that of a horse. It lives by the Nile...He has one horn on his nose that is like a sharp sword; he can pierce a rock with it if he hits it. Sometimes he attacks an elephant with it and kills it. This species consists exclusively of males. There are no females, and nobody knows how they come into being or are generated'*⁵¹.

Giraffes were even seen as a result of cross-breed and successive mating of different animals. The word Zaráffa itself means 'group' in Arabic, connecting this name to the view that its conception is a result of such successive mating. The Latin *Camelopardalis*

⁴⁷ Allin 1999, 68.

⁴⁸ Dunbabin 1999, 132-142, Figs 135, 143.

⁴⁹ Source of the line drawing: Dunbabin 1999, 134, Fig. 135.

⁵⁰ Source of the photograph: Dunbabin 1999, 140, Fig. 143.

⁵¹ Kruk 2001, 364.

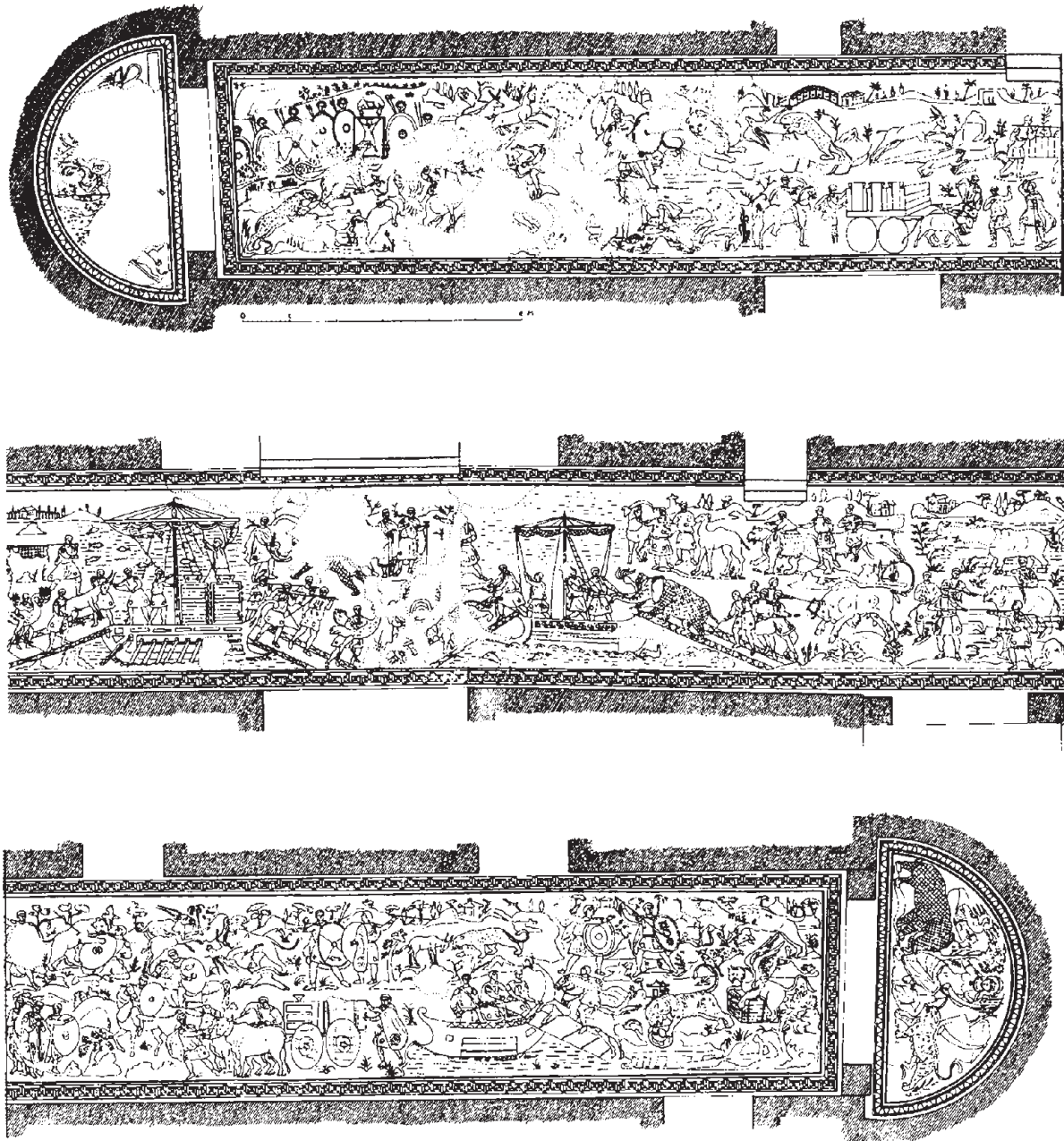


Fig. 2. The corridor at Piazza Armerina; line drawing (source: Dunbabin 1999, 134, Fig. 135)

(camel-panther) and the Persian *ushturgânpalang* (camel-cow-panther) both express the mixed impression of the animal on the ancient viewer. The fourteenth-century manuscript on Timotheus says: 'That the giraffe...is born from the intercourse of

different animals'⁵². The ninth-century Arabic writer al-Jahiz in his *Book of Animals*, disagrees with the view that the giraffe is a result of cross-breeding, but explains:

The male hyena...happens upon a female wild camel and mounts her. If she produces young, the young will be something in between a camel and

⁵² Bodenheimer/Rabinowitz 1949, 31.

*a hyena. If the young is female and is mounted by a wild bull, the result is a giraffe. The same happens if the young is male and mounts a wild cow. Some people absolutely deny the possibility that a female giraffe could be impregnated by a male giraffe: they say that every giraffe on earth is brought forth in the way they have thought up...*⁵³.

FORMALISTIC ANALYSIS: THE GIRAFFE AS A CASE STUDY

We have no knowledge as to the content of pattern books, the detail of the model and instructions they might have contained for the production of a figure. Dauphin suggests: '(pattern books) are not cartoons displaying whole pavements, but notebooks or sketch-books in which each page consisted of one sketch of one type of bird, animal, human figure, inanimate object, vegetal element or scene. These would be made into separate files dealing with birds, animals, human figures, etc., produced in a standardized fashion. Each 'workshop' or each master-craftsman would have possessed at least one complete set of files: a file for birds, a file for animals, a file for human figures and so on'⁵⁴.

Dauphin's suggestion assumes a very detailed depiction of each model in the pattern book. She also suggests a high degree of standardization in the depiction of motifs. This raises the question of how detailed the presumable pattern would be. Would it resemble patterns such as those that are used, for example, for needlework? Despite the great difference between the two crafts, needlework resembles mosaic in the nature of colour use in that sense that in each available space, only one single colour can be applied. It is the combination of colours in a certain order that creates the illusion of a figurative design. Indeed, needlework patterns refer exactly to this aspect of the artistic work and include detailed instructions for production in terms of the location and distribution of colour (Fig. 3). If mosaic patterns were that detailed, we would expect motifs that are based upon shared patterns to show a high measure of similarity, while motifs that from different patterns would show a larger degree of difference.

The figure of the giraffe will be used here as a case study in order to try and determine whether the depictions in the mosaics presented above may derive from one shared pattern or more. The approach towards the images is not only formalistic, but takes in consideration also the inlay pattern of

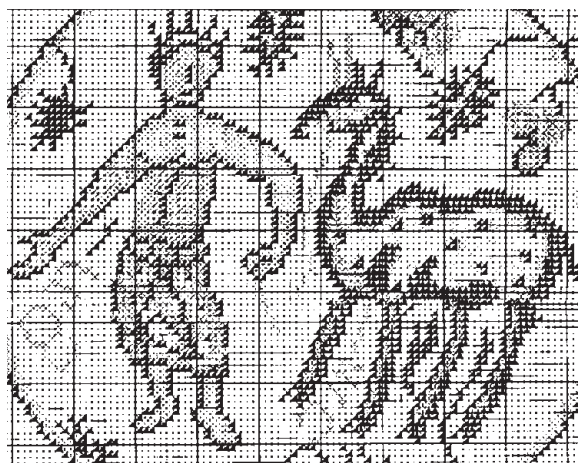


Fig. 3. An African leading a giraffe; detail from a modern needlepoint pattern based upon the mosaic of Kyria Maria in Beth Shean (here Pl. 16; Roth 1975, 18-19)

the tesserae, as indication for the technique of production applied by the executing craftsman. The giraffe depictions that were presented above show that although these animals may all be identified as giraffes, they also differ fundamentally in the details of their appearance: the giraffes of Lydda and the giraffe at the nave of Kyria Maria have both the horns of a deer, but differ in the form of the body and texture (let alone in stylistic aspects). The same giraffes of Kyria Maria share with Kissufim the form of the feet as those of a camel, but differ again in the form of body, horns and texture, and again, in style and in the aspect of inlay pattern.

A comparison between the giraffe from the right medallion of Gaza and the giraffe at Kissufim will demonstrate the differences between the two as a basis for a discussing the question whether they could derive from a shared pattern (Pls 4, 11). The comparison between these two specific examples is especially interesting, since the two sites are geographically close by, and it had been suggested in the past that they might be a product of the same workshop⁵⁵. Stylistically, both giraffes are convincingly realistic and identifiable, although they do show formalistic differences: the feet of the Kissufim giraffe

⁵³ Translation in Kruk 2008, 581.

⁵⁴ Dauphin 1978, 408.

⁵⁵ Cohen 1979, 24. Cohen suggests attributing the Kissufim pavement to the so-called 'Gaza workshop' that was identified by Avi-Yonah (Avi-Yonah 1975, 191-193).

are that of a camel, while that of Gaza have the correct form, which resembles that of a cow (Pl. 6). While the neck of the Gaza giraffe is long, the giraffe of Kissufim has a relatively short neck, perhaps in order to fit it into the height of the section in which it was depicted. Both artists attempted to create a convincing illusion of three-dimensionality and volume, but the method of creating this illusion is fundamentally different in each case, and the artists clearly produced the images in a different technique. The white intersection lines of the texture of the giraffe from Gaza create closed areas that the artist treated individually, by filling them with three lines of graduating colours from dark to light: black along the outer border, brown in between and yellow in the centre.

In the giraffe at Kissufim, there is no treatment of each section in itself, but a treatment of the whole body volume apart from the texture; there is use of two colours, light and dark ochre, in order to create shadowing and gradual colouring from dark to light, that mark the three-dimensionality of the limbs and body. This artist was capable of treating the three-dimensionality of the body apart from the structure, without interruption. He achieves this by placing the light and dark ochre lines along the outlines of the animal in a way that creates gradual tonality, skipping the interferences of the lines that mark the texture, themselves indicated in two tints: yellow and white. The effect that the artist achieved is an illusion of smooth shadows that mark the anatomy of the animal in an effective and convincing manner.

These observations show that the giraffe of Gaza and the giraffe of Kissufim are different in more than one aspect and seem not to have derived from a shared pattern. Next to difference in form, the giraffes of Gaza and Kissufim possess diverging technical qualities, deriving from a different artistic treatment. It may also be concluded that patterns, if used, did not include instructions for execution or an exact inlay pattern. In fact, it seems more reasonable that such technical aspects as the inlay patterns derive from the artistic training that each mosaicist followed; it is evident that the mosaicists of Gaza and Kissufim followed different training, learning each a different artistic tradition and production methods. The study of these application methods offers a new factor in the study of mosaics, which has the potential of shedding more light upon the transmission of application traditions and

distinguishing between producers on the basis of the application tradition applied by them.

If a shared model was used for the execution of both giraffes, it was no more than a general linear design of the outlines, which was not even specific as to the form of feet and other details. Such a pattern would allow much freedom and would enable artists to apply further details according to their own artistic insight. On the other hand, it would offer little guidance to the craftsmen who needed it. It seems, however, that artists were capable of enriching their repertoire through direct inspection when circumstances allowed. The Gaza depiction is especially convincing in this sense. The depiction is highly realistic and the various formalistic details are correct and reliable in comparison with the looks of the animal. Furthermore, if each of the two giraffes in the synagogue of Gaza is intended to be a representation of a different type (the *reticulate giraffe* next to the so-called *vine leaf pattern giraffe*), it seems convincing that the artist was not relying upon a general prototype, but actually had the chance of inspecting the real animals, being aware of the difference between the two types that were standing before him, creating a genuine design that does not appear elsewhere. The mosaic of Kissufim was produced 67 years after Gaza. That the two giraffes were produced by two different artists is clear from the chronological difference between the two mosaics. The differences between Gaza and Kissufim also indicate that the later artist, who worked in Kissufim, did not copy his image directly from the earlier Gaza mosaic, and that the two can hardly be conceived as deriving from a shared model, unless that model was so unspecific as to diminish its practical application.

The differences indicate further that the two artists did not rely upon the same artistic inlay traditions that would be expected if the later producers still belonged to the same workshop and were presumably trained by the earlier generation of artists. In such a case they would have been expected to at least preserve certain production techniques.

Where, then, did the model for Kissufim derive from? It is possible that a giraffe passed through the region also around the time of production of that mosaic, and that also the artists working in Kissufim were capable of studying the animal from nature and create an original design. At the same time, if the real animal was not available for study, it can be expected that an artist would search for an existing

model if he needed one. The fact that such a model cannot be traced still leaves the possibility of an individual creation. The artist could make inquiries as to the looks of the giraffe in order to create a convincing image or manipulate an existing image to fit what he came to know about the looks of a giraffe. The next example will illustrate that such a manipulation probably also occurred at times. Artists were thus not mere copyists, but possessed artistic capabilities that allowed them to use the models at their disposal in a creative way, change, add and manipulate them in order to enrich their repertoire. At the same time, the translation of the image into the medium of mosaic demanded from the artist to apply the techniques that he had learned during his training in order to execute a new type of image. The success of the process depended upon the experience, the artistic ability of the mosaicist, and the level in which he mastered his craft.

The two examples from the monastery of Kyria Maria in Beth Shean show that despite their similarities, the differences indicate that they could not have derived from the same pattern, and that next to the iconographic and formalistic aspects of the depiction, inlay patterns seem to differ and to indicate a different producer. The giraffe in the medalion in 'Room L' (Pl. 16) is led by a figure of African origin, which is in itself an iconographic difference in comparison to the representation at the nave. The giraffe has a camel-like body with a single hump that is slightly positioned towards the front of the body, short neck, simple straight horns, feet of a gazelle and a spotted body texture. These formalistic aspects are not shared with any of the other giraffe depictions. The inlay pattern of the tesserae reveals that in the method of production of the figure, this giraffe has unique traits, especially in its texture: the giraffe is made in four colours. A few layers of contour lines in ochre mark the outer body while the inside of the body and face is made with the light-coloured limestone that is also used for the background. The texture is made as three and sometimes four black tesserae placed in a square formation that are reduced to a single tessera dot in the legs and face. A single red line marks the lower eyelid. The other giraffe at the same site is depicted within an octagon in the nave (Pl. 14). It resembles the giraffe in 'Room L' in its general body form, which resembles a camel with a forward positioned hump. But it has the feet of a camel (not of a gazelle) and the horns of a deer (and not of a

giraffe), which show that even within one and the same site formalistic differences did occur.

Despite the difference in the shape of the horns and feet of the giraffe, it is without any doubt the camel that served as a basic model for the design of the body of both giraffes. Since the difference between a giraffe and a camel is clear to anyone who even just had a glimpse at both creatures, it should rightly be doubted whether the mosaicists who worked in Beth Shean ever saw a giraffe with their own eyes and designed the animal based upon inspection from nature. It is very much probable that the craftsmen heard a description of the curious *camelopardalis*, the 'leopard-camel', and decided to reproduce their own visual interpretation. They probably would not need any special pattern for this: the camel is an animal that is often depicted in mosaics, and, if relying upon a pattern, they could certainly use any pattern of a camel and adjust it to their needs. Interestingly, the formalistic differences between the two giraffes, such as the shape of feet and horns, seem to be a result of a different interpretation regarding the looks of the giraffe and the details in which it differs from a camel.

In contrast to the giraffes at Kyria Maria, the depictions of Lydda (Pl. 1), Kissufim (Pl. 11), both examples from Gaza Maiumas (Pls 3, 4) and the depiction at Beer-Sheva' (Pl. 10) create a rather realistic impression. The differences between the depictions, both in the formalistic as well as in the inlay patterns, make it clear that these depictions cannot have derived from a single pattern that circulated among the mosaicists.

It can be concluded that there was no standardized iconographic type or a pattern that circulated among artists, and that each depiction shows a variation in its own right. From the point of view of the inlay pattern of the tesserae, it may be observed that, even if pattern books were used, these instructions were not included in them in any way. Each giraffe depiction seems thus to have been a result of independent artistic processes, that ranged from observation of nature to designs that almost seem to reflect reliance upon secondary evidence, and in which it seems that the artist who designed the pattern had never seen a giraffe at first hand. He either misinterpreted the model he relied upon, or simply had no such model. One possible factor in the formation of the visual characteristic of such a design may be the linguistic aspect.

To illustrate this point, some attention should be given to the curious depiction of the spotted camel from the Diakonikon mosaic (Pl. 11). It appears in a section of the mosaic that is dedicated to animals for display, led by a figure of foreign origin, suggesting that this is not a regular camel. It has a leopard-like skin texture and it seems almost as though the artist made a literal visualization of the name *camelopardalis*. If this is the case, it appears that the artist never saw a giraffe himself or a reliable pattern of a giraffe. It was the far fame of the leopard-camel that triggered his imagination to create this strange looking camel. The artistic process that is involved in this creation is rather complex; if the artist did not rely upon a visual model, he must have possessed enough artistic qualities that allowed him to create a design out of his own imagination, which involves 'inventing' the iconography as well as the formalistic principles of the design, and working-out the inlay pattern that yielded the desirable design. Despite the non-realistic result of a non-existing animal, the depiction of the spotted camel is convincing and naturalistic in style. If the artist relied upon a pattern, it was probably the pattern of a camel, in which the necessary changes were made.

The depiction of the giraffe as a camel with spotted skin could have been inspired by the myth of its origin as a breed crossing between a camel and a leopard or a spotted hyena. If the design was indeed based upon the linguistic source of the name of the animal, it suggests that pattern books were far from standardized files that Dauphin suggested them to be. The study of the artistic material supports an interpretation of the pattern books as a collection of sketches for private use.

The artist who produced the spotted camel in the Old Diakonikon seems to have worked also on the mosaic of al-Khadir (Pl. 18, right corner at the second row from below). Also here we come across the iconography of the Phrygian figure leading a spotted camel, which is depicted according to the same formula of the one that appears in the Old Diakonikon. Curiously, in the same mosaic, one row under the spotted camel depiction, very destroyed, but still good to identify, is a depiction of what seems to be a giraffe of a more realistic type. The skin texture of this giraffe seems again to reflect the 'wine leaf' type. It is not a spotted camel type, but a giraffe with a straight back, long neck, and the two typical horns on its head. This giraffe is not led by a foreign figure and seems to walk around

freely, nibbling on a leaf. It seems surprising that one mosaicist would use two different formalistic principles for the depiction of the same animal. So, was the spotted camel not meant to depict the *camelopardalis* after all? Would it be an extinct type of camel? Did the artist simply sought to enrich the representation by the curious skin structure? Or did he finally obtain a (apparently rather realistic) pattern of a giraffe, but since he could not verify its reliability, doubted which of the two he should depict (resulting in the depiction of them both)? Or did he become aware of the correct form of the giraffe only after he already finished the depiction of the spotted camel? At any rate, it seems that the fame of the giraffe also reached places where it was never – or very rarely – seen. The process of creating its figure took in each case a different course, depending upon the visual sources that were available to the artist, the external knowledge that he possessed as to the nature and source of the animal, his artistic ability, his stylistic inclinations, his training and techniques of production.

CONCLUSIONS

The overview of depictions of exotic beasts in eastern mosaics shows that they gained certain popularity among artists and commissioners. The subject of exotic animals for display seems to have become a genre or a subject on its own. It appears as such in the Diakonikon mosaic, Kissufim, Gaza and al-Khadir, in which case they do not appear as isolated images, but as a group, sometimes led by a human, himself of foreign origin. At the same time, no fixed standard seems to have been developed, and the animals are grouped differently in each case. The elephant seems to have become the most popular of the four, and has entered the more general repertoire of animals. As such, it may also appear in isolation, where no other exotic beasts appear (such as in Maon-Nirim, the synagogue from the House of Leontis and Beth Govrin).

The genre developed at all probability from actual display of such animals that took place during transports along the merchant routes of the East, as described by Timotheus of Gaza. It may be assumed that such events were rather rare (and therefore worthy of recording), but they were enough to create an impact that generated a new artistic fashion. It is difficult to explain, however, why the specific figure of the giraffe does not occur

in other regions, and became popular only in this specific area of the Near East.

This investigation was aimed at drawing conclusions from the specific case study of the giraffe to the more general issue of pattern books and the use of models by mosaic artists. The iconographic and formalistic differences between the various representations show that the image of the giraffe did not go through a process of standardization, and that the depictions do not seem to derive from a shared pattern. Within each representation, variations as to the shape of the horns, the feet, the back, the proportions and skin structure can be observed. There are hardly two images that can be identified as deriving from the same pattern. The only example of two similar depictions, namely that of the spotted camels in the Old Diakonikon and in al-Khadir, may in fact be the work of one and the same artist, rather than two different depictions, produced by different artists that are derived from a shared pattern. If produced by the same artist (a hypothesis that still needs further investigation), it may mean that pattern books, if existed, were a collection of patterns and models for private use, exclusively by an individual mosaicist and perhaps by his direct assistants, rather than shared, standardized patterns that were in broad circulation.

The comparison between the giraffes from Gaza and Kissufim shows that the production method, which seems to be a function of the training of each artist, is resulting in characteristics that are unique to each of the images. The technique and pattern of inlay of the tesserae appears to be no less influential for the artistic result as the model that presumably stood before the artist. Furthermore, it seems that craftsmen were not mere copyists and the creation of each image appears to have been a dynamic creative process, in which the implementation of possible models was enriched by the ability of direct observation from nature and was submitted to flexible use and creative manipulation of the repertoire of images that a craftsman was familiar with. The training of the craftsmen played an important role in determining the artistic result. While some artists chose for application methods that led to a more naturalistic, three-dimensional and convincing depiction of the animal, others chose for more simplistic or flat representations. These factors seem not to have derived from any pattern or model, but from the artist's own stylistic traits and the artistic tradition that he was trained in. Also those artists who made

use of a creative process in which they attempted to depict an animal that they had never actually seen, manipulating the familiar repertoire to match secondary evidence as to the looks of the animal they wished to depict, did not always result in un-naturalistic depictions: the spotted camel of the Old Diakonikon is very convincing in its stylistic naturalism, despite the fact that the animal is not realistically depicted.

It is left to describe the model or pattern in the presumable pattern book as a very general drawing of the animal that was not specific as to the formalistic aspects, and did not include instructions for production. It was more a collection of the repertoire available to the artist and could be used as a tool to remind the artist of the figurative possibilities that he could apply in his mosaic. It may also have been used for illustration of those possibilities for the commissioner, but it was hardly useful for the artist in the practical aspects of production. It can further be inferred that if pattern books were involved in the production process, it was not during the production phase itself, but perhaps in the preparatory phase, that the choice of motifs was presented to the commissioner, the general layout and subject matter were, perhaps as indication of the preliminary drawings that were brought under the surface of the mosaic.

The difference in execution and inlay patterns indicates that the manner in which a figure was transformed from the pattern in a mosaic, depended to high degree upon the technique, the individual artistic capacity, and the artistic tradition that the mosaicist was trained in. Such a conclusion demands a reassessment of the whole pattern book theory regarding the eastern mosaics during the early Byzantine period. The conclusion that patterns, if existed, were very general and unspecific, does not support the theory of pattern books as a practical and indispensable tool. A pattern book was probably in itself an expensive product, which would be purchased or produced only if absolutely necessary. As shown above, this necessity is not supported by the analysis of its possible content. Other factors, especially technique and training processes of the artists seem to be more influential for the final artistic result than patterns. The presumption that such patterns were shared by more than one artist even seems untenable.

At the same time, it cannot be denied, that large parts of the repertoire itself, from hunt and pastoral scenes to grape gathering and wine production have

become popular motifs that were widely known to different craftsmen, and obviously also to the commissioners. If this was not achieved by shared patterns, a new investigation is necessary as to the mechanism of transmission of artistic traditions, based upon other principles of transmission, such as the use of technical formula and visual memory, next to the possible existence of individual collection of sketches that did not have a wide circulation. The investigation of inlay patterns may play an important role within such an investigation as a tool for studying traditions of inlay, and production techniques that were applied by individual craftsmen.

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*Pl. 9. Detail of a black man riding an elephant, from the mosaic of Beer-Shema', Israel
(photograph Israel Antiquities Authority)*



Pl. 10. Detail of the giraffe from Beer-Shema' (photograph Israel Antiquities Authority)



Pl. 11. Church of Kissufim; section with giraffe and elephant (photograph author)



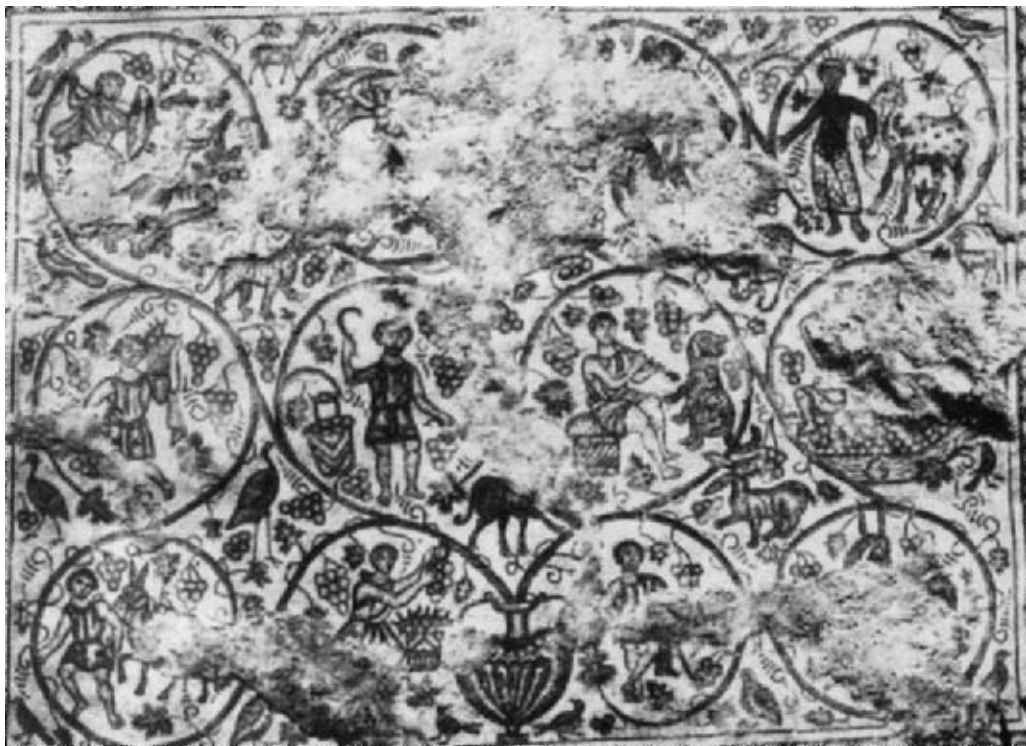
Pl. 12. The mosaic of the 'Old Diakonikon';
Memorial of Moses on Mount Nebo, Jordan
(Piccirillo 1992, 135, Fig. 166)



Pl. 13. Detail of Pl. 12 (photograph author)



*Pl. 14. Detail from the geometric carpet; Church of Kyria Maria in Beth Shean
(photograph Israel Antiquities Authority)*



Pl. 15. 'Room L'; Church of Kyria Maria in Beth Shean (Ovadiah/Ovadiah 1987, Pl. XXIV)



Pl. 16. Detail of Pl. 15: upper rightmost medallion (photograph author)



*Pl. 17. Damaged square frames with animals
(elephant to the bottom right); mosaic of Beth Guvrin, Israel
(Ovadiab/Ovadiab 1987, Pl. XI, Fig. 2)*



Pl. 18. Mosaic; Church of al-Khadir (Piccirillo 1992, 129, Fig. 142)



Pl. 19. The corridor at Piazza Armerina; detail (Dunbabin 1999, 140, Fig. 143)

Book Reviews

Sabine SCHRENK, *Textilien des Mittelmeerraumes aus spätantiker bis frühislamischer Zeit*. Gewebeanalysen: Regina Knaller, Riggisberg 2004 (Die Textilsammlung der Abegg-Stiftung, Band 4); clothbound, 23 × 31 cm, 520 pages, 206 illustrations in colour and 104 in black and white; ISBN 3-905014-24-6

The world famous Abegg-Stiftung (Abegg Foundation) in Riggisberg near Bern houses an extremely rich collection of textiles from early Christian times up to ca 1800. In the 1920s, Werner Abegg, director of a textile factory, started collecting antique textiles and later for the purpose of collecting, conservation, and research, Werner and Margaret Abegg established the Abegg-Stiftung (1961). The couple transferred their private collection to the foundation and set up a museum with a restoration department and a scientific library.

All textiles in the collection are conserved and restored 'at home' and the technical aspects studied provide a sound basis for further research. At present, the restoration department, headed by Mechthild Flury-Lemberg, is as celebrated as the collection itself. Furthermore, in collaboration with Bern University, the department has established a university level restoration training course.

The book under review is the fourth volume of the series of the Abegg-Stiftung collection catalogues, describing textiles from countries around the Mediterranean dating from late antique to early Islamic periods (ca third to ninth century). Previous volumes described medieval textiles¹ and eighteenth-century silk textiles². The complete collection of late antique and early Islamic textiles is presented for the first time and lists 253 inventory numbers³. An excursus describes recent acquisitions.

Traditionally, textile catalogues are organized according to chronology (with all dating problems involved), material, technique, or iconography, an arrangement of decorative motifs. This catalogue breaks with tradition: the chapters are arranged according to the function of the textiles or fragments preserved.

A general introduction is followed by separate chapters devoted to wall hangings, hangings and cloths, furnishing textiles and covers, tunics, tunic decorations (shoulder area of tunics, sleeve decoration, clavi, tabulae, orbiculae, ensembles of decorative elements), decorative elements of uncertain function, bands, and pastiches. Each chapter begins with an introduction; every catalogue number consists of entries for localization and dating, provenance, technical analysis (by Regina Knaller), description, comments and literature.

The appendices contain an English translation of the General Introduction and Chapter Introductions, tables of dating analysis, colour analysis, measurements of decorative elements, various aspects of textile techniques, and a concordance of inventory numbers, followed by an extensive bibliography and indices ('Monuments, Museums, and Collections', and 'Subjects, Places and Names').

Sabine Schrenk has wisely avoided the term 'Coptic textiles', a phrase unfortunately still often used for most of the textiles described in this catalogue. The terminology involves too many difficulties in a technical, chronological and religious sense (discussed in pp. 15-16). Simultaneously, 'Coptic' refers to Egypt. Schrenk points out that although the dry climate and soils of Egypt have preserved thousands of textiles and that in all probability a goodly number of the pieces in the collection do indeed come from Egypt, the origin of these textiles is not certain. They have been acquired at auctions and from art dealers and the provenance of the majority is unknown. Moreover, even if the find spot has been documented, this is not necessarily the place of manufacture.

Technical research of the fabrics (material and weaving technique) has been the key to new observations. First of all, the function of a number of fragments has been ascertained. This aspect of textile research has not received much attention so far: for a long time the field has been dominated by chronological, stylistic and iconographical studies. Knowledge of the function of a piece not only gives insights into the variety of use of textiles, it has also led to new data on the use of specific types of fabrics and decoration. Secondly, it has been possible to assign several pieces to one and the same workshop although the region where this workshop was situated often remains open to discussion.

¹ Otavsky K., Muhammad Abbas Muhammad Salim 1995, *Mittelalterliche Textilien I. Ägypten, Persien und Mesopotamien, Spanien und Nordafrika*. Under Mitarbeit von Cordula M. Kessler, Riggisberg (Die Textilsammlung der Abegg-Stiftung, Band 1).

² Ackermann H. Chr. 2000, *Seidengewebe des 18. Jahrhunderts I. Bizarre Seide*. Gewebeanalysen: Vendulka Otavská, Riggisberg (Die Textilsammlung der Abegg-Stiftung, Band 2). Jolly A. 2002, *Seidengewebe des 18. Jahrhunderts II. Naturalismus*. Gewebeanalysen: Vendulka Otavská, Riggisberg (Die Textilsammlung der Abegg-Stiftung, Band 3).

³ A choice of pieces has been published by Stauffer A. 1992, *Spätantike und koptische Wirkereien*, Bern.

The dating of textiles has always been a perilous undertaking. Dating on the basis of stylistic features has long proven to be an unreliable method but the lack of sound reference points and archaeological contexts has hampered any progress in the study. New excavations with well-documented textile finds are contributing significantly to the solution of dating problems. Moreover, they show the use and reuse of various types of fabrics, and shed new light on the questions of manufacture and import.

Radiocarbon (carbon-14) dating is a method recently introduced and it has been applied to thirty-five fabrics of the collection. The possibilities and limitations of this type of dating are discussed on pp. 16-17. A joint project of the private Katoen Natie collection in Antwerp and the Louvre in Paris to radiocarbon date related textiles has already yielded interesting results. For instance, two tunics (cat. nos 51 and 52) belong to a group of tunics related in style and choice of decorative motifs (other examples are preserved in the Louvre, the Katoen Natie collection, and the Textile Museum in Washington DC). This group is traditionally dated to the 6th-8th or even the 10th-11th centuries. Carbon-14 dating resulted in a 5th-7th century and a 6th-8th century date respectively for the Riggisberg tunics. The earlier date is supported by recent carbon-14 dating of tunics in the Katoen Natie collection and it appears that the characteristic decoration of these tunics was popular during the 5th-7th centuries.

Iconographical details can also still contribute to a more secure dating. In the case of the horsemen depicted (e.g. cat. no. 154), I would like to add that the harness of the horse contains an additional dating criterion: when stirrups are clearly visible, a date before the 7th century seems improbable⁴.

Turning to the interpretation of scenes: cat. no. 154 is described as a roundel with Old Testament scenes. In my opinion, it does contain at least one New Testament scene. According to Schrenk, the seated person with the arms crossed in the lower left part of the roundel might be interpreted as Jacob, blessing the sons of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh (Gen. 48:1-22). A nimbed person is seated on a stool and is carrying a staff or lance in his right hand. The seated person is encircled by two

half circles and at shoulder level he is flanked by busts of two persons. Above this scene is a round arch with a decorated tympanum.

Jacob never carries anything while blessing his grandsons: he simply lays his hands (his arms crossed) on the heads of the boys. The composition on the roundel is a classical example of a king or commander with two bodyguards or soldiers carrying shields, for example King Herod on his throne, ordering the Massacre of the Innocents as depicted in the quarry church of Dayr Abu Hinnis⁵. The fragments above (unfortunately this part of the roundel has been damaged) fit into a composition of slaughtering soldiers and weeping women. An article on a new interpretation of the decoration of this roundel is in preparation.

Some minor points: Schrenk states that the image on a sleeve band (cat. no. 75) might represent the Miracle of the Quails (Ex. 16:13). She refers in a footnote to older literature dealing with the few examples known but does not refer to cat. no. 15 (a painted wall hanging with Old Testament scenes from Genesis and Exodus) on which the same scene can be found.

The statement 'a border whose motifs are intended to be viewed from four different sides is often found in floor mosaics, for example, but to my knowledge has never been found on a wall hanging' (English translation (p. 459) of p. 24 n. 4) is contradicted by the decorative borders of cat. nos 6 and 16.

The English translation of the Introductions presents some problems concerning technical terms. For example, the Italian Renaissance term 'Madonna' for 'Mary' ('Madonna Silk' (p. 460 n. 13) for 'Marienseide' (cat. no. 62); 'Madonna hanging' in the Cleveland Museum of Art [p. 549]) is inappropriate in this context.

Although the indexes are comprehensive, users always have their own desiderata: for example, it would have been helpful to include groups of remarkable materials or techniques, such as the silks or the resist dyed fabrics.

However, the functional classification does give a new insight into the abundance of textiles which has survived in Egypt and the Mediterranean countries in Late Antiquity. More precise dating methods show the variety of decoration, in subjects and style, existing side by side at the same period of time. The use of silk and the inspiration from Sassanian art on textiles found in Egypt reveals the international character and wide spread trade.

It is clear that all fabrics presented are of high quality material and craftsmanship, and no doubt once belonged to the wardrobe and furnishings of the wealthier part of society. This is especially apparent in the splendid (wall) hangings (cat. nos 1-40). Although the photographs are irreproachable and measurements are duly noted it is virtually impossible to assess their real size and impact: this can only be experienced eye to eye.

The sheer volume of the book, the beautiful photographs and the competent descriptions and the wealth of information make it a breath-taking catalogue. In fact, it is much more than a catalogue: being a standard work itself, it is also a *Fundgrube* for further scholarship.

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⁴ Nicolle D. 1997, 'Arms of the Umayyad Era: Military technology in a time of change', in: Y. Lev, *War and Society in the Eastern Mediterranean, 7th-15th Centuries*, Leiden, 29, no. 49 (The Medieval Mediterranean. Peoples, Economies and Cultures, 400-1453, Vol. 9); Brune, K.-H. 1999, *Der koptische Reiter: Jäger, König, Heiliger. Ikonographische und stilistische Untersuchung zu den Reiterdarstellungen im spätantiken Ägypten und die Frage ihres "Volkskunstcharakters"*, Altenberge, 253-255 (Arbeiten zum spätantiken und koptischen Ägypten 11).

⁵ Clédat, J. 1902, 'Notes archéologiques et philologiques: II. Deir Abou-Hennis', *BIFAO* 2, 49 and Pl. I; Van Loon, G.J.M and A. Delattre 2006, 'Le cycle de l'enfance du Christ dans l'église rupestre de saint Jean Baptiste à Deir Abou Hennis', in: A. Boud'hors, J. Gascoü and D. Vaillancourt (eds), *Études Coptes IX. Onzième journée d'études (Strasbourg 12-14 juin 2003)*, Paris, 123-124, Figs 1-4 and Pl. V (Cahiers de la bibliothèque copte 14).

Lieselotte KÖTZSCHE, *Der bemalte Behang in der Abegg-Stiftung in Riggisberg. Eine alttestamentliche Bildfolge des 4. Jahrhunderts*. Mit Beiträgen von Mechthild Flury-Lemberg und Ulrich Schießl, Riggisberg, 2004 (Riggisberger Berichte, Vol. 11); libretto binding, 240 pages, 22 colour plates and 158 illustrations; ISBN 3-905014-27-0.

The restoration of the fourth-century wall hanging with painted Old Testament scenes in the Abegg-Stiftung in Riggisberg reads like a detective story. The wall hanging, now one of the masterpieces of the collection, was bought from an art dealer in 1989⁶.

An assortment of linen pieces, large and small, crumpled, fragile, dusty and dirty, was brought to the restoration department. Some paint fragments were visible but nothing indicated subject matter or composition.

A painstaking restoration of the fragments, involving a myriad of technical difficulties, produced the pieces of a gigantic puzzle. Technical aspects of the linen cloth in conjunction with iconographical knowledge of the subjects represented resulted in the reconstruction of a wall hanging 1.46 m high and ca 4.30 m wide. A series of scenes from the Books of Genesis and Exodus has been painted in tempera on a support of indigo linen. Painted borders of gemstones and pearls separate three registers and a border of garlands frames the whole composition. The lower edge fringe has been partially preserved.

With great skill and patience, Mechthild Flury-Lemberg and her assistants have restored the fragments. This process is described in the first part of the book (pp. 8-26). Ulrich Schießl has contributed an essay on the painting technique (pp. 27-70). The main part of the book consists of Lieselotte Kötzsche's detailed study of the composition and the individual scenes, as well as the question of for whom and for what purpose the hanging was made (pp. 99-235). An excellent and detailed photographic documentation of the restoration and reconstruction (the photographs 'before' and 'after' clearly show that miracles have been performed), as well as photographs of the individual scenes have been added (pp. 71-98).

The scenes follow each other without any barriers such as trees or architectural elements. The sequence is non-chronological. The first register starts with The animation of Adam and Eve (Gen. 2), followed by Adam and Eve in Paradise (Gen. 3), The sacrifice of Cain and Abel (Gen. 4:3-4), The flight of Lot and his wife from Sodom (Gen. 19:16-26), Noah, his wife and his family leaving the arch and sacrificing (Gen. 8:15-20) and Sarah.

Although placed at the end of the first register, Sarah belongs to the first scene of the second register: Abraham's hospitality at Mamre (Gen. 18:1-15), Abraham's sacrifice (Gen. 22:1-18), Jacob received by Laban (Gen. 29:1-13), Jacob's dream (Gen. 28:10-22) and The meal of Joseph's brothers (Gen. 37:25) are next.

In the third register, Joseph accompanied by an angel (Gen. 37:12-14), Jacob bringing his father Isaac a meal (Gen. 27:25), The miracle of manna (Ex. 16:13-16), Moses and the pillar of fire (Ex. 13:21-22), The Passage through the Red Sea: Pharaoh

and his army perish (Ex. 14:23-28), The Israelites saved (Ex. 14:29-31) and The miracle of the quails (Ex. 16:13) are depicted.

The most of the iconography of the various scenes fits into tradition (e.g. The flight of Lot and his wife from Sodom, Abraham's sacrifice, Jacob's dream) but is sometimes highly original (e.g. the miracles of manna and the quails, painted separately as two scenes, bordering three scenes from the Passage through the Red Sea – pp. 124-179). Inscriptions give the names of persons, personifications, and objects (pp. 180-186). Various details, such as hairstyles, the shape of altars, tables and serving dishes point to a date in the second half of the fourth century and Egypt as area of origin (pp. 186-201).

The division into registers with continuing scenes, sometimes overlapping, can be compared to monumental wall painting. But the impression of fluidity and continuation in composition is misleading: the non-chronological sequence disrupts the narrative several times. When the scriptural order is set aside, the composition seems to have been dictated by visual aspects (pp. 201-207).

The Riggisberg wall hanging is a unique piece. Nevertheless, composition and style of a number of objects of art support the theory of Egypt as the country of provenance, for example a group of resist dyed textiles with scenes from the Old and New Testaments in registers. Among the limited number of pieces of painted linen known, some fragments with a secure provenance (Antinoë – Middle Egypt) are preserved in the Louvre in Paris (pp. 208-215).

The choice of scenes (especially the banqueting scenes, reminiscent of funerary meals) in conjunction with the border of garlands, often found in funerary art, may indicate that this hanging once decorated the wall of a funerary chapel. However, another place, such as a church, cannot be excluded. Moreover, objects with Old Testament scenes often raise the question of a Jewish or Christian background. Although it cannot be ruled out, there are no markers pointing to an explicit Jewish environment (pp. 216-223).

The contributions of Kötzsche and Schießl are both furnished with their own bibliography. It is a pity that there is no index. This would have made the wealth of material presented easier to access.

Kötzsche's interpretation of the individual scenes and their iconography is convincing. Nevertheless, the composition of the three registers still poses problems. The author argues that, setting aside the scriptural order, the composition seems to have been dictated by visual aspects. Studying the composition, this line of thought is persuasive. However, in the given period of time and in view of the subjects, it is rather difficult to believe this was done simply to please the eye. An example is Sarah, depicted at the end of the top register although she belongs to the first scene in the second register, Abraham's hospitality at Mamre. Has she been set apart as a pictorial device (p. 157) or does her location signify more? It is a fact that all women depicted have been placed in the first register (Eve, Lot's wife, Noah's wife, and Sarah).

⁶ Registered as inventory number 4185.

A second point which caught my attention is the proposed function of the hanging. In my opinion, a place in a church is feasible. Without yet being able to account for the non-chronological order, a closer look has convinced me that the cycle is saturated with Christological, eschatological, sacramental and liturgical typology. As such, it would be eminently suited to a church or chapel.

Series of Old Testament wall paintings in Early Christian churches often follow the principle of typos and anti-typos, in which case a corresponding series of New Testament scenes could be found on the opposite wall. Although this hanging is

the only example preserved, it is certainly possible that it once belonged to a set of two hangings, located on opposite walls. The Old Testament cycle could have been complemented with counterparts from the New Testament. One may also argue for a set of four or even more hangings.

Since the publication of the book, various aspects of the wall hanging have attracted the attention of scholars. The Abegg-Stiftung has dedicated a colloquium to this remarkable piece of art, focusing mainly on iconographical aspects of the scenes, dating and function⁷.

This enigmatic masterpiece will undoubtedly continue to intrigue scholars and will inspire new research. However, Lieselotte Kötzsche's book, beautifully published as are all Abegg-Stiftung publications, will remain the source publication and pioneering study to build on for decades to come.

Gertrud J.M. van Loon

⁷ *Internationales Kolloquium – Der bemalte Behang mit alttestamentlicher Bildfolge in der Abegg-Stiftung*, Riggisberg 8-9 June 2006.